

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

SEPT. 1909

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AINSLEE'S FOR OCTOBER

"THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS"

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

The new "Graustark" story has made a hit from the very start. No serial story in years has taken such a grip on the reading public as Mr. McCutcheon's "*Truxton King*." The third installment will be the leading feature of the October number of AINSLEE'S.

MOLLY ELLIOTT SEAWELL

The complete novel, "*The Whirlpool*," marks Miss Seawell's return to the magazines after a considerable absence. Her new story is one of international marriage, the heroine of which is an American woman whose tragic experiences will stir the sympathy of every one who reads of them.

J. W. MARSHALL will have one of the funniest short stories that ever was written. "*The Meddlers*" tells of the attempts of a bunch of cowboys to take care of a baby.

GERTRUDE WARDEN will be represented with another of her absorbing tales of Sylvia Sligh, called "*The Millionaire's Son and Heir*."

JANE W. GUTHRIE will have another of her delightful stories of bridge, called "*The Winning Suit*."

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG is with us again in his charming forecast of the coming musical season in New York. This series promises to be the best that he has ever done.

CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK will contribute an intensely interesting tale, "*A Corner in Coupons*," which shows that captains of industry are not invulnerable.

WOLCOTT BEARD contributes a tale of a man who, through no fault of his own, is an outcast, but still has sentiment enough left to help a woman in trouble.

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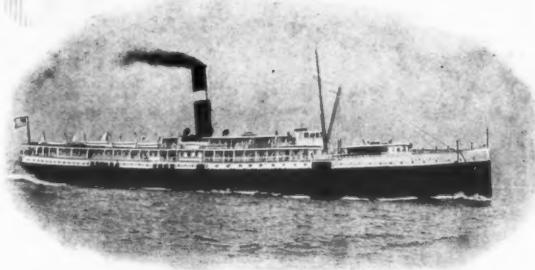
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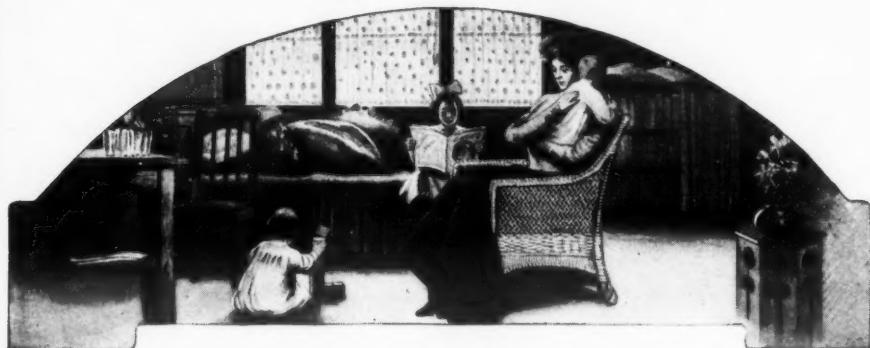
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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

VOL. XXIV

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"AT LAST SHE LEANED NEARER TO HIM,
DROPPING THE ASH FROM
HER CIGARETTE."

Illustrated by Harrison Fisher.
Ainslee Insert, Sept., 1909.

"Truxton King."
A Story of Gruinstark.
By George Barr McCutcheon.
See page 19.

AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXIV.

SEPTEMBER, 1909.

No. 2

TRUXTON KING

a story of GRAUSTARK

By

George Barr McCutcheon

SYNOPSIS OF "TRUXTON KING."

A young American, Truxton King, a member of a prominent New York family, has come abroad in search of romance and adventure; and finally finds himself in Edelweiss, the capital of Graustark. The hereditary ruler of the little kingdom is Prince Robin, a lad of seven, who is under the guardianship of John Tullis, a life-long friend of the little prince's dead American father. King finding at first but little romance in the place, strolls into the shop of William Spantz, the court armorer, and there encounters the latter's beautiful niece, Olga Platanova. The girl begs him not to come there any more, hinting at some mysterious danger to both herself and him. The minister of police, Baron Dangloss sends for King, and after evincing an extraordinary knowledge of the young man's previous history, tells him that Olga is an anarchist and warns him to have nothing further to do with her.

CHAPTER IV.



RUXTON KING went to bed that night, tired and happy. To his revived spirits and his new attitude toward life in its present state, the city had suddenly turned gay and vivacious. Twice during the evening he passed Spantz's shop. It was dark, upstairs and down. He wondered if the unhappy Olga was looking at him from behind the darkened shutters. But even if she were not—la la! He was having a good time! He was gay! He was seeing pretty women in the cafés and the gardens! Well, well, he would see her to-morrow—after that he would give

proper heed to the baron's warning. An anarchist's daughter!

He slept well, too, with never a thought of the Saturday express which he had lain awake on other nights to lament and anathematize. Bright and early in the morning he was astir. Somehow he felt he had been sleeping too much of late.

There was a sparkle in his eyes as he struck out across town after breakfast. He burst in upon Mr. Hobbs at Cook's.

"Say, Hobbs, how about the castle to-day—in an hour, say? Can you take a party of one rubbernecking this a. m.? I like you, Hobbs. You are the best interpreter of English I've ever seen. I can't help understanding you, no matter how hard I try not to. I want you to get me into the castle

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grounds to-day and show me where the duchesses dawdle and the countesses cavort. I'm ashamed to say it, Hobbs, but since yesterday I've quite lost interest in the middle classes and the component parts thereof. I have suddenly acquired a thirst for champagne—in other words, I have a hankering for the nobility. Catch the idea? Good! Then you'll guide me into the land of the fairies? At ten?"

"I'll take you to the castle grounds, Mr. King, all right enough, sir, and I'll tell you all the things of interest, but I'll be 'anged, sir, if I've got the blooming nerve to introduce you to the first ladies of the land. That's more than I can ever 'ope to do, sir, and—"

"Lord bless you, Hobbs, don't look so depressed. I don't ask you to present me at court. I just want to look at the lilacs and the gargoyles. That's as far as I expect to carry my invasion of the dream world."

"Of course, sir, you understand there are certain parts of the park not open to the public. The grotto and the playgrounds and the Basin of Venus—"

"I'll not trespass, so don't fidget, Hobbs. I'll be here for you at ten."

Mr. Hobbs looked after the vigorous, happy figure as it swung down the street, and shook his head mournfully. Turning to the solitary clerk behind the cashier's desk, he remarked, with more feeling than was his wont:

"He's just the kind of chap to get me into no end of trouble if I give 'im rope enough. Take it from me, Stokes, I'll have my hands full of 'im up there this morning. He's charged like a soda bottle, and you never know wot's going to happen unless you handle a soda bottle very careful-like."

Truxton hurried to the square and across it to the shop of the armorer, not forgetting, however, to look about in some anxiety for the excellent Dangloss who might, for all he knew, be snooping in the neighborhood. Spantz was at the rear of the shop, talking to a customer. The girl was behind the counter, dressed for the street.

She came quickly out to him, a disturbed expression in her face. As he

doffed his hat, the smile left his lips; he saw that she had been weeping.

"You must not come here, Mr. King," she said hurriedly, in low tones. "Take your broadsword this morning and—please, for my sake, do not come again. I—I cannot explain why I am asking you to do this, but I mean it for your good, more than for my own. My uncle will be out in a moment. He knows you are here. He is listening now to catch what I am saying to you. Smile, please, or he will suspect—"

"See here," demanded King, smiling, but very much in earnest, "what's up? You've been crying. What's he been doing or saying to you? I'll give him a—"

"No, no! Be sensible! It is nothing in which you could possibly take a hand. I don't know you, Mr. King, but I am in earnest when I say that it is not safe for you to come here, ostensibly to buy. It is too easily seen through—it is—"

"Just a minute, please," he interrupted. "I've heard your story from Baron Dangloss. It has appealed to me. You are not happy. Are you in trouble? Do you need friends, Miss Iatanova?"

"It is because you would be a friend that I ask you to stay away. You cannot be my friend. Pray, do not consider me bold for assuming so much. But I know—I know *men*, Mr. King. The baron has told you all about me?" She smiled sadly. "Alas, he has only told you what he knows. But it should be sufficient. There is no place in my life for you or any one else. There never can be. So, you see, you may not develop your romance with me as the foundation. Oh, I've heard of your quest of adventure. I like you for it. I had an imagination myself, once on a time. I loved the fairy books and the love tales. But not now—not now. There is no romance for me. Nothing but grave reality. Do not question me! I can say no more. Now I must be gone. I—I have warned you. Do not come again!"

"Thanks for the warning," he said quietly. "But I expect to come in oc-

casionally, just the same. You've taken the wrong track by trying to frighten me off. You see, Miss Platanova, I'm actually looking for something dangerous—if that's what you mean."

"That isn't all, believe me," she pleaded. "You can gain nothing by coming. You know who I am. I cannot be a friend—not even an acquaintance to you, Mr. King. Good-by! Please do not come again!"

She slipped into the street and was gone. King stood in the doorway, looking after her, a puzzled gleam in his eyes. Old Spantz was coming up from the rear, followed by his customer.

"Queer," thought the American. "She's changed her tactics rather suddenly. Smiled at me in the beginning, and now cries a bit because I'm trying to return the compliment. Well, by the Lord Harry, she shan't scare me off like—Hello, Mr. Spantz! I'm here for the sword."

The old man glared at him in unmistakable displeasure. Truxton began counting out his money. The customer, a swarthy fellow, passed out of the door, turning to glance intently at the young man. A meaning look and a sly nod passed between him and Spantz. The man halted at the corner below, and, later on, followed King to Cook's office, afterward to the castle gates, outside of which he waited until his quarry reappeared. Until King went to bed late that night, this swarthy fellow was close at his heels, always keeping well out of sight himself.

"I'll come in soon to look at those rings," said King, placing the notes on the counter.

Spantz merely nodded, raked in the bills without counting them, and passed the sword over to the purchaser.

"Very good, sir," he growled, after a moment.

"I hate to carry this awful thing through the streets," said King, looking at the huge weapon with despairing eye. Inwardly, he was cursing himself for his extravagance and cupidity.

"It belongs to you, my friend. Take it, or leave it."

"I'll take it," said Truxton, smiling indulgently. With that, he picked up the weapon and stalked away.

A few minutes later he was on his way to the castle grounds, accompanied by the short-legged Mr. Hobbs, who, from time to time, was forced to remove his tight-fitting cap to mop a hot, exasperated brow, so swift was the pace set by longlegs. The broadsword reposed calmly on a desk under the nose of a properly impressed young person named Stokes, cashier.

Hobbs led him through the great park gates and up to the lodge of Jacob Frasch, the venerable high steward of the grounds. Here, to King's utter disgust, he was booked as a plain Cook's tourist and mechanically advised to pay strict attention to the rules which would be explained to him by the guide.

"Cook's tourist, eh?" muttered King wrathfully, as they ambled down the shady path together. He looked with disparaging eye upon the plain little chap beside him.

"It's no disgrace," growled Hobbs, redder than ever. "You're inside the grounds, and you've got to obey the rules, same as any tourist. Right this way, sir; we'll take a turn just inside the wall. Now, on your left, ladies and —ahem!—I should say—ahem!—sir, you may see the first turret ever built on the wall. It is over four hundred years old. On the right, we have——"

"See here, Hobbs," said King, stopping short, "I'm damned if I'll let you lecture me as if I were a gang of hayseeds from Oklahoma."

"Very good, sir. No offense. I quite forgot, sir."

"Just tell me—don't lecture."

For three quarters of an hour they wandered through the spacious grounds, never drawing closer to the castle than permitted by the restrictions; always coming up to the broad driveway which marked the border line, never passing it. The gorgeous beauty of this historic old park, so full of traditions and the lore of centuries, wrought strange fancies and bold inclinations in the head of the audacious visitor. He felt the bonds of restraint;

he resented the irksome chains of convention; he murmured against the laws that said he should not step across the granite road into the cool forbidden world beyond—the world of kings. Hobbs knew he was doomed to have rebellion on his hands before long; he could see it coming.

"When we've seen the royal stables, we'll have seen everything of any consequence," he hastened to say. "Then we'll leave by the upper gates and—"

"Hobbs, this is all very beautiful and very grand and very slow," said King, stopping to lean against the moss-covered wall that encircled the park within a park; the grounds adjoining the grotto. "Can't I hop over this wall and take a peep into the grotto?"

"By no means," cried Hobbs, horrified. "That, sir, is the most proscribed spot, next to the castle itself. You can't go in there."

King looked over the low wall. The prospect was alluring. The pool, the trickling rivulets, the mossy banks, the dense shadows; it was maddening to think he could not enter.

"I wouldn't be in there a minute," he argued. "And I might catch a glimpse of a dream-lady. Now, I say, Hobbs, here's a low place. I could jump—"

"Mr. King, if you do that, I am ruined forever. I am trusted by the steward. He would cut off all my privileges—" Hobbs could go no farther. He was prematurely aghast. Something told him that Mr. King would hop over the wall.

"Just this once, Hobbs," pleaded his charge. "No one will know."

"For the love of Moses, sir, I—" Hobbs began to wail. Then he groaned in dismal horror. King had lightly vaulted the wall, and was grinning back at him from the sacred precincts—from the playground of princesses.

"Go and report me, Hobbs, there's a good fellow. Tell the guards I wouldn't obey. That will let you out, my boy, and I'll do the rest. For Heaven's sake, Hobbs, don't burst! You'll explode sure if you hold in like that much longer. I'll be back in a minute."

He strode off across the bright green turf toward the source of all this enchantment, leaving poor Mr. Hobbs braced against the wall, weak-kneed and helpless. If he heard the frantic, though subdued, whistles and the agonized "hi'l" of the man from Cook's a minute or two later, he gave no heed to the warning. A glimpse behind might have shown him the error of his ways, reflected in the disappearance of Hobbs' head below the top of the wall. But he was looking ahead, drinking in the forbidden beauties of this fascinating little nook of nature.

Never, in all his wanderings, had he looked upon a more inviting spot than this. He came to the edge of the deep blue pool, above which could be seen the entrance to the grotto. Little rivulets danced down through the crannies in the rocks and leaped joyously into the tree-shaded pool. Below and to the right were the famed Basins of Venus, shimmering in the sunlight, flanked by trees and banks of the softest green. On their surface swam the great black swans he had heard so much about. Through a wide rift in the trees he could see the big, gray castle, half a mile away, towering against the dense greens of the near-by mountain. The picture took his breath away. He forgot Hobbs. He forgot that he was trespassing. Here, at last, was the Graustark he had seen in his dreams.

Regardless of surroundings or consequences, he sat down upon the nearest stone bench, and removed his hat. He was hot and tired, and the air was cool. He would drink it in as if it were an ambrosial nectar—and, moreover, he would also enjoy a cigarette. Carefully he refrained from throwing the burnt-out match into the pool below; even such as he could feel that it might be desecration. As he leaned back with a sigh of exquisite ease and a splendid exhalation of Turkish smoke, a small, imperious voice from somewhere behind broke in upon his primary reflections.

"What are you doing in here?" demanded the voice.

Truxton, conscious of guilt, whirled with as much consternation as if he had been accosted by a voice of thunder. He beheld a very small boy standing at the top of the knoll above him, not thirty feet away. His face was quite as dirty as any small boy's should be at that time of day, and his curly brown hair looked as if it had not been combed since the day before. His firm little legs, in half hose and presumably white knickers, were spread apart and his hands were in his pockets.

King recognized him at once, and looked about uneasily for the attendants who he knew should be near. It is safe to say that he came to his feet and bowed deeply, even in humility.

"I am resting, your highness," he said meekly.

"Don't you know any better than to come in here?" demanded the prince.

Truxton turned very red.

"I am sorry. I'll go at once."

"Oh, I'm not going to put you out," hastily exclaimed the prince, coming down the slope. "But you are old enough to know better. The guards might shoot you if they caught you here." He came quite close to the trespasser. King saw the scratch on his nose. "Oh, I know you now. You are the gentleman who picked up my crop yesterday. You are an American." A friendly smile illuminated his face.

"Yes, a lonely American," with an attempt at the pathetic.

"Where's your home at?"

"New York. Quite a distance from here."

"You ever been in Central Park?"

"A thousand times. It isn't as nice as this one."

"It's got amilies—no, I don't mean that," supplemented the prince, flushing painfully. "I mean—an-i-muls," very deliberately. "Our park has no elephunts or taggers. When I get big I'm going to set out a few in the park."

"I've shot elephants and tigers in the jungles," said Truxton. "I tell you they're no fun when they get after you, wild. If I were you I'd set 'em out in cages."

"P'raps I will." The prince seemed very thoughtful.

"Won't you sit down, your highness?"

The youngster looked cautiously about. "Say, do you ever go fishing?" he demanded eagerly.

"Occasionally."

"You won't give me away, will you?" with a warning frown. "Don't you tell Jacob Frasch. He's the steward. I—I know a fine place to fish. Would you mind coming along? Look out, please! You're awful big and they'll see you. I don't know what they'd do to us if they ketched us. It would be dreadful. Would you mind sneaking, mister? Make yourself little. Right up this way."

The prince led the way up the bank, followed by the amused American, who stooped so admirably that the boy, looking back, whispered that it was "just fine." At the top of the knoll, the prince turned into a little shrub-lined path leading down to the banks of the pool almost directly below the rocky face of the grotto.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered to his new friend. "It ain't very deep, if you should slip in. But you'd scare the fish away. Gee, it's a great place to catch 'em. They're all red, too. D'you ever see red fish?"

Truxton started. This was no place for him! The prince had a right to poach on his own preserves, but a grown man to be caught in the act of landing the royal goldfish was not to be thought of. He hung back.

"I'm afraid I won't have time, your highness. A friend is waiting for me back there. He——"

"It's right here," pleaded the prince. "Please stop a moment. I—I don't know how to put the bait on the pin. I just want to catch a couple. They won't bite unless there's worms on the hook. I tried 'em. Look at 'em! Goodness, there's lots of 'em. Nobody can see us here. Please, mister, fix a worm for me."

The man sat down behind a bush and laughed joyously. The eager, appealing look in the lad's eyes went to

his heart. What was a goldfish or two? A fish has no feeling—not even a goldfish. There was no resisting the boyish eagerness.

"Why, you're a real boy, after all. I thought being a prince might have spoiled you," he said.

"Uncle Jack says I can always be a prince, but I'll soon get over being a boy," said Prince Bobby sagely. "You will fix it, won't you?"

King nodded, conscienceless now. The prince scurried behind a big rock and reappeared at once with a willow branch, from the end of which dangled a piece of thread. A bent pin occupied the chief end in view. He unceremoniously shoved the branch into the hands of his confederate, and then produced from one of his pockets a silver cigarette box, which he gingerly opened to reveal to the gaze a conglomerate mass of angleworms.

"A fellow gets awful dirty digging for worms, doesn't he?" he pronounced. "I should say so," agreed the big boy. "Whose cigarette case is this?"

"Uncle Caspar's—I mean Count Halfont's. He's got another, so he won't miss this one. I'm going to leave some worms in it when I put it back in his desk. He'll think the fairies did it. Do you believe in fairies?"

"Certainly, Peter," said Truxton, engaged in impaling a stubborn worm. "My name isn't Peter," said the prince coldly.

"I was thinking of Peter Pan. Ever hear of him?"

"No. Say, you mustn't talk or you'll scare 'em away. Is it fixed?" He took the branch and gingerly dropped the hook into the dancing pool. In less time than it requires to tell it, he had a nibble, a bite, and a catch. There never was a boy so excited as he when the scarlet nibbler flew into the shrubbery above; he gasped with glee. Truxton recovered the catch from the bushes and coolly detached the truculent pin.

"I'll have 'em for dinner," announced the prince.

"Are you going to catch a mess?" queried the man, appalled.

"Sure," said Bobby, casting again with a resolute splash.

"Are you not afraid they'll get onto you if you take them to the castle?" asked the other diplomatically. "Goldfish are a dead give away."

"Nobody will scold 'cept Uncle Jack, and he won't know about it. He's prob'ly gone away by this time."

King noticed that his lip trembled suddenly.

"Gone away?"

"Yes. He was banished this morning right after breakfast." The announcement began with a tremor, but ended with imperial firmness.

"Great Scott!" gasped the other, genuinely shocked.

"I banished him," said the prince ruefully. "But," with a fine smile, "I don't think he'll go. He never does. See my sign up there?" He pointed to the rocks near the grotto. "I did it with Hugo's shoeblocking."

A placard containing the important announcement, "NO FISHING ALOUD," stared down at the poachers from a tree trunk above. There was nothing very peremptory in its appearance, but its designer was sufficiently impressed by the craftiness it contained.

"I put it up so's people wouldn't think anybody—not even me—would dare to fish here. Oh, look!" The second of his ruddy mess was flopping in the grass. Again Truxton thought of Mr. Hobbs, this time with anxious glances in all directions.

"Where do they think you are?"

"Out walking with my aunt. Only she met Count Vos Engo, and while they were talking I made a sneak—I mean, I stole away."

"Then they'll be searching for you in all parts of the—" began Truxton, coming to his feet. "I really must be going. Please excuse me, your—"

"Oh, don't go! I'll not let 'em do anything to you," said the prince staunchly. "I like Americans better than anybody else," he went on, with deft persuasiveness. "They ain't—are'n't afraid of anything. They're not cowards."

Truxton sat down at once. He could not turn tail in the face of such an exalted opinion.

"I'm not supposed to ever go out alone," went on the prince confidentially. "You see, they're going to blow me up if they get a chance."

"Blow you up?"

"Haven't you heard about it? With dynamite bums—bombs. Yes, sir! That's the way they do to all princes."

He was quite unconcerned. Truxton's look of horror diminished. No doubt it was a subterfuge employed to secure princely obedience, very much as the common little boy is brought to time by mention of the ubiquitous bogie man.

"That's too bad," commiserated Truxton, baiting the pin once more.

"It's old Count Marlanx. He's going to blow me up. He hated my mother and my father, so I guess he hates me. He's terrible, Uncle Caspar says."

King was very thoughtful for a moment. Something vivid yet fleeting had shot through his brain—something that he tried to catch and analyze, but it was gone before he could grasp its significance. He looked with new interest upon this serene, lovable little chap who was growing up, like all princes, in the shadow of disaster.

Suddenly, the fisherman's quick little ears caught a sound that caused him to reveal a no uncertain agitation. He dropped his rod incontinently and crawled to the opening in the shrubbery, peering with alarmed eyes down the path along the bank.

"What is it? A dynamiter?" demanded Truxton uneasily.

"Worse'n that," whispered his royal highness. "It's Aunt Loraine. Gee!" To King's utter dismay, the prince scuttled for the underbrush.

"Here!" he called in consternation. The prince stopped, shamefaced, on the instant. "I thought you were going to protect me."

"I shall," affirmed Bobby, manfully resuming his ground. "She's coming up the path. Don't run," he exclaimed scornfully, as Truxton started for the

rocks. "She can't hurt you. She's only a girl."

"All right, I won't run," said the big culprit, who wished he had the power to fly.

"And there's Saffo and Cors over there watching us, too. We're caught. I'm sorry, mister."

On the opposite bank of the pool stood two rigid members of the royal guard, intently watching the fishers. King was somewhat disturbed by the fact that their rifles were in a position to be used at an instant's notice. He felt himself turning pale as he thought of what might have happened if he had taken to flight.

A young lady in a rajah silk gown, a flimsy panama hat tilted well over her nose, with a red feather that stood erect, as if always in a state of surprise, turned the bushes and came to a stop almost at King's elbow. He had time to note, in his confusion, that she was about shoulder-high alongside him, and that she was staring up into his face with amazed gray eyes. Afterward he was to realize that she was amazingly pretty, that her teeth were very white and even, that her eyes were the most beautiful and expressive he had ever seen, that she was slender and imperious, and that there were dimples in her cheeks so fascinating that he could not gather sufficient strength of purpose to withdraw his gaze from them. Of course, he did not see them at the outset; she was not smiling, so how could he?

The prince came to the rescue. "This is my Aunt Loraine, Mr.—Mr.——" He swallowed hard and looked helpless.

"King," supplied Truxton, "Truxton King, your highness." Then with all the courage he could produce, he said to the beautiful lady: "I'm as guilty as he. See!" He pointed ruefully to the four goldfish, which he had strung upon wire grass and dropped into the edge of the pool.

She did not smile. Indeed, she gave him a very severe look.

"How cruel," she murmured. "Bobby, you deserve a sound spanking.

You are a very naughty little boy." She spoke rapidly in French.

"He put the bait on," said Bobby, also in French. Here was treachery! Truxton delivered himself of some French.

"Oh, I say, your highness, you said you'd pardon me if I were caught."

"I can't pardon you until you are found guilty," said the prince in English.

"Please put those poor little things back in the pool, Mr. King," said the lady, in perfect English.

"Gladly—with the prince's permission," said King, also in English.

The prince looked glum, but interposed no imperial objection. Instead he suddenly shoved the cigarette box under the nose of his dainty relative, who, at that unpropitious instant, stooped over to watch King's awkward attempt to release the fishes.

"Look at the worms," said the prince engagingly, opening the box with a snap.

"Oh!" cried the young lady, starting back. "Throw them away! The horrid things!"

"Oh, they can't bite," scoffed the prince. "See! I'm not afraid of 'em. Look at this one."

He held up a wriggler and she fled to the rock. She happened to glance at Truxton's averted face and was conscious of a broad grin; whereupon she laughed in the quick staccato of embarrassment.

It must be confessed that King's composure was sorely disturbed. In the first place, he had been caught in a most reprehensible act, and in the second place, he was not quite sure that the prince could save him from ignominious expulsion under the very eyes—and perhaps direction—of this trim and attractive member of the royal household. He found himself blundering foolishly with the fishes and wondering whether she was a duchess or just a plain countess. Even a regal personage might jump at the sight of angleworms, he reflected.

He glanced up, to find her studying him, plainly perplexed.

"I just wandered in here," he began guiltily. "The prince captured me down there by the big tree."

"Did you say your name is Truxton King?" she asked, somewhat skeptically.

"Yes, your—yes, ma'am," he replied. "Of New York."

"Your father is Mr. Emerson King? Are you the brother of Adèle King?"

Truxton stared. "Have you been interviewing the police?" he asked before he thought.

"The police? What have you been doing?" she cried, her eyes narrowing.

"Most everything. The police know all about me. I'm a spotted character. I thought, perhaps, they had told you about me."

"I asked if you were Adèle's brother."

"I am."

"I've heard her speak of her brother Truxton. She said you were in South America."

He stared the harder. Could he believe his ears?

She was regarding him with cool, speculative interest. "I wonder if you are he?"

"I think I am," he said, but doubtfully. "Please pardon my amazement. Perhaps I'm dreaming."

"We were in the convent together for two years. Now that I observe you closely, you do resemble her. We were very good friends, she and I."

"Then, you'll intercede for me?" he urged, with a fervent glance in the direction of the wall.

She smiled joyously. He realized then and there that he had never seen such beautiful teeth, nor any creature so radiantly beautiful, for that matter.

"More than that," she said, "I shall assist you to escape. Come!"

He followed her through the shrubbery, his heart pounding violently. The prince, who trotted on ahead, had mentioned a count. Was she married? Was she of the royal blood? What extraordinary fate had made her the friend of his sister? He looked back and saw the two guardsmen crossing

the bridge below, their eyes still upon him.

"It's very good of you," he said.

She glanced back at him, a quaint smile in her eyes.

"For Adèle's sake, if you please. Trespassing is a very serious offense here. How did you get in?"

"I hopped in, over the wall."

"I'd suggest that you do not hop out again. Hopping over the walls is not looked upon with favor by the guards."

He recalled the distressed Mr. Hobbs. "The man from Cook's tried to restrain me," he said in proper spirit. "He was very much upset."

"I dare say. You are a Cook's tourist, I see. How very interesting. Bobby, Uncle Jack is waiting to take you to see the trained dogs at the eastern gate."

The prince gave a whoop of joy, but instantly regained his dignity.

"I can't go, auntie, until I've seen him safe outside the walls," he said firmly. "I said I would."

They came to the little gate and passed through, into a winding path that soon brought them to a wide, main-traveled avenue. A light broke in upon Truxton's mind. He had it. This was the wonderful Countess Marlanx! No sooner had he come to that decision than he was forced to abandon it. The countess' name was Ingomedé.

"I suppose I shall have to recall Uncle Jack from exile," he heard the prince saying to the beautiful lady. Truxton decided that she was not more than twenty-two. But they married very young in these queer old countries—especially if they happened to be princes or princesses. He wanted to talk, to ask questions, to proclaim his wonder, but discreetly resolved that it was best to hold his tongue. He was by no means sure of himself.

Be that as it may, he was filled with a strange rejoicing. Here was a woman with whom he was as sure to fall in love as he was sure that the sun shone. He liked the thought of it. Now he appreciated the distinction between the Olga Platanova type and that which

represented the blood of kings. There was a difference! Here was the true patrician!

The castle suddenly loomed up before them—gray and frowning, not more than three hundred yards away. He was possessed of a wild desire to walk straight into the grim old place and proclaim himself the feudal owner, seizing everything as his own—particularly the young woman in the rajah silk. People were strolling in the shady grounds. He felt the instant infection of happy indolence, the call to luxury. Men in gay uniforms and men in cool flannels; women in the prettiest and daintiest of frocks—all basking in the playtime of life, unmindful of the toil that fell to the sons of Martha out in the sordid world.

"Do you think you can find your man from Cook's?" she asked.

"Unless he has gone and jumped into the river, your—madam. In any event, I think I may safely find my way out. I shall not trouble you to go any farther. Thank you for overlooking my indiscretion. Thank you, my dear little prince, for the happiest experience of my life. I shall never forget this hour." He looked boldly into her eyes, and not at the prince. "Have you ever been in New York?" he asked abruptly.

He was not at all sure whether the look she gave him was one of astonishment or resentment. At any rate, it was a quick glance, followed by the palpable suppression of words that first came to her lips, and the substitution of a very polite:

"Yes, and I love it."

He beamed. The smile that came into her eyes escaped him. If he could have seen it, his bewilderment would have been sadly increased.

"Say!" whispered the prince, dropping back as if to impart a grave secret. "See that man over there by the fountain, Mr. King?"

"Bobby!" cried the lady sharply. "Good-by, Mr. King. Remember me to your sister when you write."

"That's Aunt Loraine's beau," announced the prince. "That's Count Eric Vos Engo."

Truxton's look turned to one of interest at once. The man designated was a slight, swarthy fellow in the uniform of a colonel. He did not appear to be particularly happy at the moment.

The American observed the lady's dainty ears. They had turned a delicate pink.

"May I ask who—" began Truxton timidly.

"She will know if you merely call me Loraine."

"So-long," said the prince.

They parted company at once, the prince and the lady in the rajah silk going toward the castle, King toward the gates, somewhat dazed and by no means sure of his senses. He came down to earth after he had marched along on air for some distance, so to speak, and found himself deciding that she was a duchess here, but Loraine at school. What a wonderful place a girl's school must be! And his sister knew her—knew a lady of high degree!

"Hobbs!" he called, catching sight of a dejected figure in front of the chief steward's door.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Mr. Hobbs sullenly.

"It is, Hobbs—very much me. I've been fishing with royalty and chatting with the nobility. Where the devil have *you* been?"

"I've been squaring it with old man Frasch. I'm through with you, sir. No more for me, not if I know—"

"Come along, Hobbs," said the other blithely, taking Hobbs by the arm. "The prince sent his love to you."

"Did he mention Cook's?" gasped Hobbs.

"He certainly did," lied Truxton. "He spoke of you most kindly. He wondered if you could find time to come around to-morrow."

CHAPTER V.

It has been said before that Truxton King was the unsuspecting object of interest to two sets of watchers. The fact that he was under the surveillance of the government police is not sur-

prising when we consider the evident thoroughness of that department; but that he should be continually watched by persons of a more sinister cast suggests a mystery which can be cleared up by visiting a certain underground room, scarce two blocks from the Tower of Graustark. It goes without saying that corporeal admittance to this room was not to be obtained easily. In fact, one must belong to a certain band of individuals; and, in order to belong to that band, one must have taken a very solemn pledge of eternal secrecy and a primal oath to devote his life to certain purposes, good or evil according to his conscience. By means of the friendly sesame that has opened the way for us to the gentler secrets, we are permitted to enter this forbidding apartment and listen in safety to the ugly business of the committee of ten.

There were two ways of reaching this windowless room, with its low ceilings and dank airs. If one had the secret in his possession, he could go down through the mysterious trapdoor in the workshop of William Spantz, armorer to the crown; or he might come up through a hidden aperture in the walls of the great government sewer which ran directly parallel with and far below the walls of the quaint old building. One could take his choice of direction in approaching this hole in the huge sewer; he could come up from the river, half a mile away, or he could come down from the hills above, if he had the courage to drop through one of the intakes.

It is of special significance that the trapdoor in Spantz's workshop was reserved for use by the armorer and his more fastidious comrades—of whom three were women and one an established functionary in the royal household. One should not expect ladies to traverse a sewer if other ways are open to them. The manner of reaching the workshop was not as simple, however, as you might suppose. The street door was out of the question, with Dangloss on the watch, day and night. As much can be said for the rear door.

It was necessary, therefore, that the favored few should approach the shop by extraordinary paths. For instance, two of the women came through friendly but unknown doors in the basements of adjoining houses, reaching the workshop by the narrow stairs leading up from a cobwebby wine cellar next door. Spantz and Olga Platanova, of course, were at home in the place. All of which may go to prove that while ten persons comprised the committee, at least as many more of the shopkeepers in that particular neighborhood were in sympathy with their secret operations.

So cleverly were all these means of approach concealed and so stealthily the movements of the committee, that the existence of this underground room, far below the street level, was as yet unsuspected by the police. More than that, the existence of the committee of ten as an organization was unknown to the department, notwithstanding the fact that it had been working quietly, seriously, for more than a year.

The committee of ten represented the brains and the activity of a rabid coterie in Edelweiss, among themselves styled the Party of Equals. In plain language, they were "Reds." Less than fifty persons in Graustark were affiliated with this particular community of anarchists. For more than a year they had been preparing themselves against the all-important hour for public declaration. Their ranks had been augmented by occasional recruits from other lands; their literature was circulated stealthily; their operations were as secret as the grave, so far as the outside world was concerned. And so the poison sprang up and thrived unhindered in the room below the street, growing in virulence and power under the very noses of the vaunted police of Edelweiss, slowly developing into a power that would some day assert itself with diabolical fury.

There were men and women from Aixhain and Dawsbergen in this seed circle that made Edelweiss its spreading ground. They were Reds of the most dangerous type—silent, voiceless,

crafty men and women who built well without noise, and who gave out nothing to the world from which they expected to take so much.

The nominal leader was William Spantz, he who had a son in the prince's household, Julius Spantz, the master-of-arms. Far off in the hills above the Danube, there lived the real leader of this deadly group—the Iron Count Marlanx, exile from the land of his birth, hated and execrated by every loyal Graustarkian, hating and execrating in return with a tenfold greater venom. Marlanx, the man who had been driven from wealth and power by the sharp edict of Prince Robin's mother, the lamented Yetive, in the days of her most glorious reign—this man, deep in his raging heart, was in complete accord with the desperate band of Reds who preached equality and planned disaster.

Olga Platanova was the latest acquisition to this select circle. A word concerning her: She was the daughter of Professor Platanova, one time oculist and sociologist in a large German university. He had been one of the most brilliant men in Europe and a member of a noble family. There was welcome for him in the homes of the nobility; he hobnobbed, so to speak, with the leading men of the empire. The Platanova home in Warsaw was one of the most inviting and exclusive in that great city. The professor's enthusiasm finally carried him from the conservative paths in which he had walked; after he had passed his fiftieth year, he became an avowed leader among the anarchists and revolutionists in Poland, his native state. Less than a year before the opening of this tale he was executed for treason and conspiracy against the empire.

His daughter, Olga, was recognized as one of the most beautiful and cultured young women in Warsaw. Her suitors seemed to be without number; nor were they confined to the student and untitled classes with whom she was naturally thrown by force of circumstance. More than one lordly adventurer in the lists of love paid homage

to her grace and beauty. Finally there came one who conquered and was beloved. He was the son of a mighty duke, a prince of the blood.

It was true love for both of them. The young prince pledged himself to marry her, despite all opposition; he was ready to give up his noble inheritance for the sake of love. But there were other forces greater than a young man's love at work. The all-powerful ruler of an empire learned of this proposed mésalliance and was horrified. Two weeks afterward the prince was called. The will of the crown was made known to him and—he obeyed. Olga Platanova was cast aside, but not forgotten. He became the husband of an unloved, scrawny lady of diadems. When the situation became more than he could bear, he blew out his brains.

When Olga heard the news of his death, she was not stricken by grief. She cried out her joy to a now cloudless sky, for he had justified the great love that had been theirs and would be theirs to the end of time.

From a passive believer in the doctrines of her father and his circle, she became at once their most impassioned exponent. Over night, she changed from a gentle-hearted girl into a woman whose breast flamed with a lust for vengeance against a class from which death alone could free her lover. She threw herself, heart and soul, into the deliberations and transactions of the great red circle; her father understood and yet was amazed.

Then he was put to death by the class she had come to hate. One more stone in the sepulchre of her tender, girlish ideals. When the time came, she traveled to Graustark in response to the call of the committee of ten; she came prepared to kill the creature she would be asked to kill. And yet, down in her heart, she was sore afraid.

She was there, not to kill a man grown old in wrongs to her people, but to destroy the life of a gentle, innocent boy of seven!

There were times when her heart shrank from the unholy deed she had been selected to perform; she even

prayed that death might come to her before the hour in which she was to do this execrable thing in behalf of the humanity she served. But there was never a thought of receding from the bloody task set down for her—a task so morbid, so horrid that even the most vicious of men gloated in the satisfaction that they had not been chosen in her place.

Weeks before she came to Graustark, Olga Platanova had been chosen by lot to be the one to do this diabolical murder. She did not flinch, but came resolute and ready. Even the men in the committee of ten looked upon the slender, dark-eyed girl with an awe that could not be conquered. She had not the manner of an assassin, and yet they knew that she would not draw back; she was as soft and as sweet as the Madonnas they secretly worshiped, and yet her heart was steeled to a purpose that appalled the fiercest of them.

On a Saturday night, following the last visit of Truxton King to the armorer, the committee of ten met in the underground room to hear the latest word from one who could not be with them in person, but was always there in spirit—if they were to believe his most zealous utterances. The Iron Count Marlanx, professed hater of all that was rich and noble, was the power behind the committee of ten. The assassination of the little prince and the overthrow of the royal family awaited his pleasure; he was the man who would give the word.

Not until he was ready could anything be done, for Marlanx had promised to put the committee of ten in control of this pioneer community when it came under the dominion of anarchists.

Alas, for the committee of ten! The wiliest fox in the history of the world was never so wily as the Iron Count. Some day they were to find out that he was using them to pull his choicest chestnuts from the fire.

The committee was seated around the long table in the stifling, breathless room, the armorer at the head. Those who came by way of the sewer had

performed ablutions in the queer toilet room that once had been a secret vault for the storing of feudal plunder. What air there was came from the narrow ventilator that burrowed its way up to the shop of William Spantz, or through the chimney hole in the ceiling. Olga Platanova sat far down the side, a moody, inscrutable expression in her dark eyes. She sat silent and oppressed through all the acrid, bitter discussions which carried the conclave far past the midnight hour. In her heart, she knew that these men and women were already thinking of her as a regicide. It was settled—it was ordained.

At Spantz's right lounged Peter Brutus, a lawyer—formerly secretary to the Iron Count, and now his sole representative among these people. He was a dark-faced, snaky-eyed young man, with a mop of coarse black hair that hung ominously low over his high, receding forehead. This man was the chosen villain among all the henchmen who came at the beck and call of the Iron Count.

Julius Spantz, the armorer's son, a placid young man of goodly physical proportions, sat next to Brutus, while down the table ranged others deep in the consideration of the world's gravest problems. One of the women was Madame Drovansk, whose husband had been sent to Siberia for life; and the other, Anna Croner, a rabid Red lecturer who had been driven from the United States together with her amiable husband, an assassin of some distinction and many aliases, at present foreman in charge of one of the bridge-building crews on the new railroad.

Every man in the party, and there were eight, for Olga was not a member of the ten, wore over the lower part of his face a false black beard of huge dimensions. Not that they were averse to recognition among themselves, but in the fear that by some hook or crook Dangloss or his agents might be able to look in upon them—through stone walls, as it were. They were not men to belittle the powers of the wonderful little baron.

As it sat in secret conclave, the com-

mittee of ten was a sinister-looking group.

Brutus was speaking. "The man is a spy. He has been brought here from America by Tullis. Sooner or later you will find that I am right."

"It is best to keep close watch on him," advised one of the men. "We know that he is in communication with the police, and we know that he visits the castle, despite his declaration that he knows no one there. To-day's experience proves that. I submit that the strictest caution be observed where he is concerned."

"We shall continue to watch his every movement," said William Spantz. "Time will tell. When we are positive that he is a detective and that he is dangerous, there is a way to stop his operations."

His son grinned amiably as he swept his finger across his throat. The old man nodded.

"Dangloss suspects more than one of us," ventured Brutus, his gaze traveling toward Olga. There was lewd admiration in that steady glance. "But we'll fool the old fox. The time will soon be here for the blow that frees Graustark from the yoke. She will be the pioneer among our estates, we the first of the individuals in equality; here the home seat of perfect rulership. There is nothing that can stop us. Have we not the most powerful of friends? Who is greater and shrewder than Count Marlanx? Who could have planned and perfected an organization so splendid?"

He had the floor, and having the floor means everything to a Red. For half an hour he spoke with impassioned fervor, descanting furiously on the amazing virtues of his wily master and the plans he had arranged. It appeared in the course of his remarks that Marlanx had friends and supporters in all parts of Graustark. Hundreds of men in the hills, including honest shepherds and the dishonest brigands who thrived on them, coal miners and wood stealers, hunters and outlaws were ready to do his bidding when the time was ripe. Moreover,

Marlanx had been successful in his design to fill the railway construction crews with the riffraff of all Europe, all of whom were under the control of leaders who could sway them in any movement, provided it was against law and order. As a matter of fact, according to Brutus, nearly a thousand aliens were at work on the road, all of them ready to revolt the instant the command was given by their advisors.

Something that the committee of ten did not know was this; those alien workmen were no less than so many hired mercenaries in the employ of the Iron Count, brought together by that leader and his agents for the sole purpose of overthrowing the crown in one sudden, unexpected attack, whereupon Count Marlanx would step in and assume control of the government. They had been collected from all parts of the world to do the bidding of this despised nobleman, no matter to what lengths he might choose to lead them. Brutus, of course, knew all this; his companions on the committee were in complete ignorance of the true motives that brought Marlanx into their operations.

With a cunning that commands admiration, the Iron Count deliberately sanctioned the assassination of the little prince by the Reds, knowing that the condemnation of the world would fall upon them instead of him, and that his own actions following the regicide would at once stamp him as irrevocably opposed to anarchy and all of its practices.

In the course of his remarks, Peter Brutus touched hastily upon the subject of the little prince.

"He's not very big," said he, with a laugh, "and it won't require a very big bomb to blow him to smithereens. He will—"

"Stop!" cried Olga Platanova, springing to her feet and glaring at him with dilated eyes. "I cannot listen to you! You shall not speak of it in that way! Peter Brutus, you are not to speak of—of what I am to do! Never—never again!"

They looked at her in amazement and no little concern. Madame Dro-

vonask was the first to speak, her glittering eyes fastened upon the drawn, white face of the girl across the table.

"Are you going to fail? Are you weakening?" she demanded.

"No! I am not going to fail! But I will not permit any one to jest about the thing I am to do. It is a sacred duty with me. But, Madame Drovonask—all of you, listen—it is a cruel, diabolical thing, just the same. Were it not in behalf of our great humanity, I, myself, should call it the blackest piece of cruelty the world has ever known. The slaughter of a little boy! A dear, innocent little boy! I can see the horror in all of your faces! You shudder as you sit there, thinking of the thing I am to do. Yes, you are secretly despising me, your instrument of death! I—I, a girl, I am to cast the bomb that blows his dear little body to pieces. I! Do you know what that means? Even though I am sure to be blown to pieces by the same agent, the last thing I shall look upon is his dear, terrified little face as he watches me hurl the bomb. Ah!"

She shuddered violently as she stood there before them, her eyes closed as if to shut out the horrible picture her mind was painting. There were other white faces and ice-cold veins about the table. The sneer on Anna Cromer's face deepened.

"She will bungle it," came in an angry hiss from her lips.

Olga's lids were lifted. Her dark eyes looked straight into those of the older woman.

"No," she said quietly, her body relaxing, "I shall not bungle it."

William Spantz had been watching her narrowly, even suspiciously. Now his face cleared.

"She will not fail," he announced calmly. "Let there be no apprehension. She is the daughter of a martyr. Her blood is his. It will flow in the same cause. Sit down, Olga, my dear. We will not touch upon this subject again—until—"

"I know, uncle," she said quietly, resuming her seat and her attitude of indifference.

The discussion went back to Truxton King. "Isn't it possible that he is merely attracted by the beauty of our charming young friend here?" ventured Madame Drovonask, after many opinions had been advanced respecting his interest in the shop and its contents. "It is a habit with Americans, I am told."

"Miss Platanova is most worthy of the notice of any man," agreed Brutus, with an amiable leer.

Olga seemed to shrink within herself. It was plain that she was not a kindred spirit to these vicious natures.

"It is part of his game," said Julius Spantz. "He knows Olga's past; he is waiting for a chance to catch her off her guard. He may even go so far as to make pretty love to you, cousin, in the hope that—no offense, my dear, no offense!" Her look had silenced him.

"Mr. King is not a spy," she said steadily.

"Well," concluded William Spantz, "we are safe if we take no chances with him. He must be watched all the time. If we discover that he is what some of us think he is, there is a way to end his usefulness."

"Let him keep away from the shop," said Peter Brutus, with a sidelong glance at the delicate profile of the girl down the table.

She smiled suddenly, to the amazement of her sinister companions.

"Have no fears, Brutus. When he hears that you object, he will be very polite and give us a wide berth," she said.

Peter flushed angrily.

"He doesn't mean any good by you," he snapped. "He'll fool you and—poof! Away he goes, rejoicing."

She still smiled. "You have a very good opinion of me, Peter Brutus."

"Well," doggedly, "you know what men of his type think of shopgirls. They consider them legitimate prey."

"And what, pray, do men of your type think of us?" she asked quietly.

"Enough of this," interposed William Spantz. "Now, Brutus, what does Count Marlanx say to this day two

weeks? Will he be ready? On that day the prince and the court are to witness the unveiling of the Yetive memorial statue in the plaza. It is a full holiday in Graustark. No man will be employed at his usual task, and—"

Brutus interrupted him. "That is the very day that the count has asked me to submit to the committee. He believes it to be the day of all days. Nothing should go amiss. We conquer with a single blow. By noon of that day, the twenty-sixth of July, the committee of ten will be in control of the state; the new régime will be at hand. A new world will be begun, with Edelweiss as the centre about which all the rest shall revolve. We—the committee of ten—will be its true founders. We shall be glorified forever—"

"We've heard all this before, Brutus," said Julius Spantz unfeeling, "a hundred times. It's talk, talk, talk! What we need now is action. Are we sure that the count will be prepared to do all that he says he will on the twenty-sixth of July? Will he have his plans perfected? Are his forces ready for the stroke?"

"Positively. They await the word. That's all I can say," growled Peter. "The death of the prince is the signal for the overthrow of the present government and the establishment of the new order of equal humanity."

"After all," mused Julius, master-at-arms in the castle, "it is more humane to slay the prince while he is young. It saves him from a long life of trouble and fear and the constant dread of the very thing that is to happen to him now. Yes, it is best that it should come soon." Down in his heart, Julius loved the little prince.

For an hour longer the committee discussed plans for the eventful day. Certain details were left for future deliberations; each person had his part to play and each one was settled in his or her determination that nothing should go amiss.

The man they feared was Dangloss. They did not fear God!

When they dispersed for the night,

it was to meet again three days hence for the final word from Marlanx, who, it seems, was not so far away that communication with him was likely to be delayed. A sword hung over the head of Truxton King, an innocent outsider, and there was a prospect that it would fall in advance of the blow that was intended to startle the world. Olga Platanova was the only one who did not look upon the sprightly American as a spy in the employ of the government—a dangerously clever spy at that.

Up in the distant hills slept the Iron Count, dreaming of the day when he should rule over the new Graustark—for he would rule!—a smile on his grizzled face in reflection of recent waking thoughts concerning the punishment that should fall swiftly upon the assassins of the beloved Prince Robin.

He would make short shrift of assassins!

CHAPTER VI.

A light, chilling drizzle had been falling all evening, patterning softly upon the roof of leaves that covered the sidewalks along Castle Avenue, glistening on the lamplit pavements and blowing ever so gently in the faces of those who walked in the dripping shades. Far back from the shimmering sidewalks, surrounded by the blackest of shadows, and approached by hedge-bordered paths and driveways, stood the mansions occupied by the nobility of this gay little kingdom. A score or more of ancient palaces, in which the spirit of modern aggression had wrought interior changes, but had left the exteriors untouched, formed this aristocratic line of homes. Here were houses that had been built in the fifteenth century—great, square, solemn-looking structures, grown gray and green with age.

There were lights in a thousand windows along this misty, royal road—lights that reflected the pleasures of the rich and yet caused no envy in the hearts of the loyal poor.

Almost in the centre of the imposing line, stood the home of the Duke of Perse, minister of finance, flanked

on either side by structures as grim and as gay as itself, yet far less significant in their generation. Here dwelt the most important man in the principality, not excepting the devoted prime minister himself. Not that Perse was so well beloved, but that he held the destinies of the land in Midas-like fingers. More than that, he was the father of the far-famed Countess Marlanx, the most glorious beauty at the Austrian and Russian courts. She had gone forth from Graustark as its most notable bride since the wedding day of the Princess Yetive, late in the nineties.

Ingomedé, the Beautiful, had journeyed far to the hymeneal altar; the husband who claimed her was a hated, dishonored man in his own land. They were married in Buda Pesth. All Europe pitied her at the time; there was but one form of prophecy as to her future. There were those who went so far as to say that her father had delivered her into the hands of a latter-day Bluebeard, who whisked her off into the highlands many leagues from Vienna.

She was seen no more in the gay courts for a year. Then, of a sudden, she appeared before them all, as dazzlingly beautiful as ever, but with a haunting, wistful look in her dark eyes that could not be mistaken. The old count found an uneasy delight in exhibiting her to the world once more, plainly as a bit of property that all men were expected to look upon with envy in their hearts. She came up out of the sombre hills, freed from what must have been nothing less than captivity in that once feudal castle, to prove to his world that she thrived in spite of prophetic babbler. They danced from court to court, grotesquely mismatched, deceiving no one as to the true relations that existed between them. She despised him without concealment; he took pride in showing that he could best resent her attitude by the most scrupulous devotion, so marked that its intent could not be mistaken.

Then the Duke of Perse resumed his residence in Edelweiss, opening the old

palace once more to the world. His daughter, after the death of the princess, began her extended visits to the home of her girlhood. So long as the princess was alive, she remained away from Edelweiss, reluctant to meet the friend who had banished her husband long before the wedding day in Buda Pesth. Now she came frequently and stayed for weeks at a time, apparently happy during these escapes from life in the great capitals. Here, at least, she was free from the grim old man whose countess she was; here, all was sweet and warm and friendly, delicious contrast to the cold, bitter life she knew on the Danube.

Without warning she came and without farewells she left Edelweiss on the occasion of these periodical visits. No word was ever spoken concerning her husband, except on the rare occasions when she opened her heart to the father who had bartered her into slavery for the sake of certain social franchises that the Iron Count had at his disposal. The outside world, which loved her, never heard of these bitter passages between father and child. Like Cinderella, she sometimes disappeared from joyous things at midnight; the next heard of her, she was in Vienna, or at Schloss Marlanx.

If the Duke of Perse repented of his bargain in giving his daughter to the Iron Count, he was never known to intimate as much. He loved Ingomedé in his own hard way. No doubt he was sorry for her. It is a fact that she was sorry for him. She could read his bitter thoughts more clearly than he suspected.

Of late, she came more frequently to Edelweiss than before. She was seen often at the castle. No court function was complete without the presence of this lovely noblewoman, no salon worth while unless graced by her wit and her beauty.

John Tullis was always to remember the moment when he looked upon this exquisite creature for the first time. That was months ago. After that, he never ceased being a secret, silent worshiper at her transient shrine.

2

Ten o'clock on this rainy night: A carriage has drawn up before the lower gates to the Perse grounds, and a tall, shadowy figure leaves it to hurry through the shrub-lined walks to the massive doors. A watchman in the garden salutes him. The tall figure dips his umbrella in response, characteristically laconic. A footman lifts his hand to his forelock at the top of the steps and throws open the doors without question. This visitor is expected, it is plain to be seen; a circumstance which may or may not explain the nervousness that attends him as he crosses the broad hall toward the library.

Tullis had long since ceased to be a welcome visitor in the home of the Duke of Perse. The men were openly unfriendly to each other. The duke resented the cool interference of the sandy-haired American; on the other hand, Tullis made no effort to conceal his dislike, if not distrust, of the older man. He argued—with unofficial and somewhat personal authority—that a man who could trade his only child for selfish ends might also be impelled to sacrifice his country's interests without cramping his conscience.

The countess was alone in the long, warm-tinted library. She stood before the dying embers in the huge old fireplace, her foot upon one of the great iron dogs. Her smiling face was turned toward the door as he entered.

"It is good of you to come," she said, as they shook hands warmly. "Do you know it is almost a year since you last came to this house?"

"It would be a century, countess, if I were not welcomed in other houses where I am sure of a glimpse of you from time to time and a word now and then. Still, a year's a year. The room hasn't changed, so far as I can see. The same old tiger skin there, the rugs, the books, the pictures—the leopard's skin here, and the—yes, the lamp is just where it used to be. 'Pon my soul, I believe you are standing just as you were when I last saw you here. It's uncanny. One might think you hadn't moved in all these months!"

"Or that it has been a minute instead

of a year," she supplemented. His quick, involuntary glance about him did not escape her understanding. "The duke has gone to Ganlook to play bridge with friends," she said at once. "He will not return till late. I have just telephoned—to make sure." Her smile did more than to reassure him.

"Of course, you will understand how impossible it is for me to come here, countess. Your father, the duke, doesn't mince matters, and I'm not quite a fool."

"Do you think ill of me for asking you to come to-night?"

"Not at all," he said cheerfully, "so long as you are quite sure that your father is in Ganlook. He would be perfectly justified in kicking me out if he were to catch me here. And as I'm rather cumbersome and he's somewhat venerable, I don't like to think of the jar it would be to his system. But, so long as he isn't here, and I am, why shouldn't I draw up a chair before the fire for you, and another for myself, with the cigarettes and a world between us, to discuss conditions as they are, not as they might be if we were discovered? Shall I? Good! I defy any one's father to get me out of this chair until I am ready to relinquish it voluntarily."

"I suppose you superintended the 'going-to-bed' of Prince Robin before you left the castle," she said, lying back in the comfortable chair and stretching her feet out to the fire.

He handed her a match and watched her light the long, ridiculously thin cigarette.

"Yes. I never miss it, countess. The last thing he does, after saying his prayers, is to recall me from exile. He wouldn't be happy if he couldn't do that. He says amen and hops into bed. Then he grins in a far from imperial way and announces that he's willing to give me another chance, and please won't I tell him the latest news concerning Jack-the-giant-killer. He asked me to-night if I thought you'd mind if he banished your father. They've had a children's quarrel, I believe. If you *do* mind, I am to let him

know; he won't banish him. He's very fond of you, countess."

"He is a dear boy. I adore him. I think I quite understand why you are giving up your life to him. At first I wasn't sure."

"You thought I expected to gain something by it, is not that so? Well, there are a great many people who think so still—your father among them. They'll never understand. I don't blame them, for, I declare to you, I don't fully appreciate it myself. John Tullis playing nurse and story-teller to a seven-year-old boy, to the exclusion of everything else, is more than I can grasp. Somehow, I've come to feel that he's mine. That must be the reason. But, you've heard me prate on this subject a hundred times. Don't let me start it again. There's something else you want to talk to me about, so please don't encourage me to tell all the wonderful things he has said and done to-day."

"It is of the prince that I want to speak, Mr. Tullis," she said, suddenly serious. "I don't care to hear whether he stubbed his toe to-day, or just how much he has grown since yesterday, but I do want to talk very seriously with you concerning his future—I might say his immediate future."

He looked at her narrowly.

"Are you quite serious?"

"Quite. I could not have asked you to come to this house for anything trivial. We have become very good friends, you and I. Too good, perhaps, for I've no doubt there are old tabbies in Edelweiss who are provoked to criticism—you know what I mean. Their world is full of imaginary affairs, else what would there be left for old age? But, we are good friends and we understand why we are good friends, so there's the end to that. As I say, I could not have asked so true a friend into the house of his enemy for the mere sake of having my vanity pleased by his obedience."

"I am quite sure of that," he said. "Are you in trouble, countess? Is there anything I can do?"

"It has to do with the prince, not

with me," she said. "And yet I am in trouble—or perhaps I should say, I am troubled."

"The prince is a sturdy little beggar," he began, but she lifted her hand in protest.

"And he has sturdy, loyal friends. That is agreed. And yet—" She paused, a perplexed line coming between her expressive eyes.

John Tullis opened his own eyes very wide. "You don't mean to say that he is—he is in peril of any sort?"

She looked at him a long time before speaking. He could feel that she was turning something over in her mind before giving utterance to the thought.

At last she leaned nearer to him, dropping the ash from her cigarette into the receiver as she spoke slowly, intensely. "I think he is in peril—in deadly peril."

He stared hard. "What do you mean?" he demanded, with an involuntary glance over his shoulder.

She interpreted that glance correctly.

"The peril is not here, Mr. Tullis. I know what you are thinking. My father is a loyal subject. The peril I suggest never comes to Graustark."

She said no more, but leaned forward, her face whiter than its wont. He frowned, but it was the effect of temporary perplexity. Gradually the meaning of her simple, though significant, remark filtered through his brain.

"Never comes to Graustark?" he almost whispered. "You don't—you can't mean your—your husband?"

"I mean Count Marlanx," she said steadily.

"He means evil to Prince Robin? Good heavens, countess, I—I can't believe it. I know he is bitter, revengeful, and all that, but—"

"He is all that and more," she said. "First, you must let me impress you that I am not a traitor to his cause. I could not be that, for the sufficient reason that I only suspect its existence. I am not in any sense a part of it. I do not *know* anything. I only feel. I dare say you realize that I do not love Count Marlanx—that there is absolutely nothing in common between us ex-

cept a name. We won't go into that. I—"

"I am overjoyed to hear you say this, countess," he said very seriously. "I have been so bold on occasion to assert—for your private ear, of course—that you could not, by any freak of nature, happen to care for Count Marlanx, whom I know only by description. You have laughed at my so-called American wit, and you have been most tolerant. Now I feel that I am justified. I'm immeasurably glad to hear you confess that you do not love your husband."

"I cannot imagine any one so stupid as to think that I do love Count Marlanx, or, for that matter, that he loves me. Still, I am relieved to hear you say that you are glad. It simplifies the present for us, and that is what we are to discuss."

"You are very, very beautiful, and young, and unhappy," he said irrelevantly, a darker glow in his cheeks.

She smiled serenely, without a trace of diffidence or emotion.

"I can almost believe it, you say it so convincingly," she said.

For a moment she relaxed luxuriantly into an attitude of physical enjoyment of herself, surveying her toe tips with a thoughtfulness that comprehended more; and then as abruptly came back to the business of the moment.

"You must not spoil it all by saying it too fervently," she went on, with a smile of warning.

He gave a short laugh of confusion and sank back in the chair.

"You have never tried to make love to me," she continued. "That's what I like about you. I think most men are silly, not because I am so very young, but because my husband is so ridiculously old. Don't you think so? But, never mind! I see you are quite eager to answer—that's enough. Take another cigarette and—listen to what I am going to say."

He declined the cigarette with a shake of his head.

After a moment, she went on resolutely: "As I said before, I do not know that my suspicions are correct. I

have not even breathed them to my father. He would have laughed at me. My husband is a Graustarkian, even as I am, but there is this distinction between us; he despises Graustark, while I love her in every drop of my blood. I know that in his heart he has never ceased to brew evil for the throne that disgraced him. He openly expresses his hatred for the present dynasty, and has more than once said in public gatherings that he could cheerfully assist in its utter destruction. That, of course, is commonly known in Graustark, where he is scorned and derided. But he is not a man to serve his hatred with mere idle words and inaction." She stopped for a moment, and then cried impulsively: "I must first know that you will not consider me base and disloyal in saying these things to you. After all, he is my husband."

He saw the faint curl of her lip. "Before that," he argued simply, "you were a daughter of Graustark. You were not born to serve a cause that means evil to the dear land. Graustark first made you noble; you can't go back on that, you know. Don't let your husband degrade you. I think you can see how I feel about it. Please believe that I know you can do no wrong."

"Thank you," she said, returning the look in his earnest gray eyes with one in which the utmost confidence shone. "You are the only man to whom I feel sure that I can reveal myself and be quite understood. It isn't as if I had positive facts to divulge, for I have not; they are suspicions, fears, that's all, but they are no longer vague shapes to me; they mean something."

"Tell me," he said quietly.

He seemed to square his broad shoulders and to set his jaw firmly, as if to resist physical attack. She knew she had come with her fears to a man in whose face it was declared that he could laugh at substance as well as shadow.

"I am seeing you here in this big room, openly, for the simple reason that if I am being watched this manner of meeting may be above suspicion. We may speak freely here, for

we cannot be heard unless we raise our voices. Don't betray surprise or consternation. The eyes of the wall may be better than its ears."

"You don't mean to say you are being watched here in your father's house?" he demanded.

"I don't know. This I do know; the count has many spies in Edelweiss. He is systematically apprised of everything that occurs at court, in the city, or in the council chamber. So, you see, he is being well served, whether to an evil purpose or to satisfy his own innate curiosity, I do not know. He has reports almost daily—voluminous things, partly in cipher, partly free, and he is forever sending men away on secret, mysterious missions. Understand, I do not know that he is actually planning disaster to Graustark. Day before yesterday, I saw his secretary in the streets—a man who has been in his employ for five years or more, and who now pretends to be a lawyer here. His name is Brutus. I spoke with him. He said that he had left the count six weeks ago in Vienna, determined to set out for himself in his chosen profession. He knows, of course, that I am not and never have been in the confidences of my husband. I asked him if it was known in Edelweiss that he had served the count as secretary. He promptly handed me one of his business cards, on which he refers to himself as the former trusted and confidential secretary of Count Marlanx. Now, I happen to know that he is still in my husband's service—or was no longer ago than last week."

"My dear countess, he may be serving him legitimately as an attorney. There would be nothing strange in that."

"But he is still serving him as confidential secretary. He is here for a purpose, as my husband's representative. I have not been asleep all these months at Schloss Marlanx. I have seen and heard enough to convince me that some great movement is on foot. My intelligence tells me that it has to do with Graustark. As he wishes the prince no good, it must be for evil."

"But there is nothing he can do. He has no following here. The prince is adored by the people. Count Marlanx would not be such a fool as to—"

"He is no fool," she interrupted quickly. "That's why I am afraid. If he is plotting against the crown, you may depend upon it he is laying his plans well. John Tullis, that man is a devil—a devil incarnate."

A spasm of utter repugnance crossed her face; she shuddered so violently that his hand went forth to clutch the fingers that trembled on the arm of the chair. He held them in his firm grasp for a moment. They looked into each other's eyes and he saw the flicker of undisguised horror in hers. An instant later she was herself again. Withdrawing her hand, she added, with a short laugh of derision: "Still I did not expect heaven, so why complain."

"But you are an angel," he blurted out.

"I don't believe the count will agree to that," she said, with a reflective twinkle in her dark eyes. "He has not found me especially angelic. If you imagine that I cannot scratch back, my dear friend, you are very much mistaken. I have had the pleasure of giving him more than one bad half hour. You may be sure he has never called me an angel. Quite the other thing, I assure you. But, we are straying from the point."

"Wait a moment, please," he commanded. "I want to say to you here and now; you are the gentlest, loveliest woman I have ever known. I don't say it idly. I mean it. If you gave him half as good as he sent, I rejoice in your spirit. Now, I want to ask if you expect to go back to live with the da—with him."

"That, Mr. Tullis, is hardly a matter I can discuss with you," she said gently, and he was not offended.

"Perhaps not, countess, but now is the time for you to decide the issue. Why should you return to Castle Marlanx? Why keep up the farce—or I might say, tragedy—any longer? You love Graustark. You love the prince. You betray them both by consorting

with their harshest foe. Oh, I could tell you a thousand reasons why—"

"We haven't time for them," she interrupted, with mock despair in her face. "Besides, I said we cannot discuss it. It requires no learned argument to move me, one way or the other. I can decide for myself."

"You should divorce him," he said harshly.

She laughed easily, softly. "My good friend, if I did that, I'd lose your friendship."

He opened his lips to remonstrate, but suddenly caught the undercurrent of the naïve remark.

"By Jove," he said, his eyes glowing, "you must not risk finding me too obtuse."

"Bravo!" she cried. "You are improving."

"I could provide a splendid substitute for the friendship you speak of," he said coolly.

"Poof! What is that to me? I could have a hundred lovers—but, *ach*, friends are the rarest things in the world. I prefer friendship. It lasts. There! I see disapproval in your face! You Americans are so literal." She gazed into the fireplace for a moment, her lips parted in a whimsical smile. He waited for her to go on; the words were on her tongue's end, he could tell. "A divorce at twenty-five, I believe that is the accepted age, isn't it? If one gets beyond that, she— But, enough of this!" She sprang to her feet and stood before him, the flush dying in her eyes even as it was born. "We diverge! You must go soon. It is best not to be seen leaving here at a very late hour—especially as my father is known to be away. I am afraid of Peter Brutus. He is here to watch—everybody."

She was leaning against the great carved mantel post, a tall, slender, lissome creature, exquisitely gowned in rarest Irish lace, her bare neck and shoulders gleaming white against the dull timbers beyond, the faint glow from the embers creeping up to her face with the insistence of a maiden's flush. He gazed in rapt admiration, a

heart thumping like fury in his great breast. She was little more than a girl, this wife of old Marlanx, and yet how wise, how clever, how brilliant she was!

A face of unusual pallor and extremely patrician in its modeling, surmounted by a coiffure so black that it could be compared only to ebony—black and almost gleaming with the life that was in it. It came low on her forehead, shading the wondrous dark eyes—eyes that were a deep yellowish green in their division between gray and black, eyes that were soft and luminous and unwaveringly steadfast, impelling in their power to fascinate, yet even more dangerously compassionate when put to the test that tries woman's vanity.

There were diamonds on her long, tapering fingers, and a rope of pearls in her hair. A single wide gold band encircled her arm above the elbow, an arm band as old as the principality itself, for it had been worn by twenty fair ancestors before her. The noble women of Graustark never wore bracelets on their wrists; always the wide, chased gold band on the upper arm. There was a day, not so far back in history, when they wore bands on their ankles.

She was well named Ingomedé, the Beautiful.

A soft, almost imperceptible perfume, languorous in its appeal to the senses, exuded from this perfect creation; added to this, the subtle, unfailing scent of young womanhood; the warm, alive feel of her presence in the atmosphere, a suggestion of something sensuous, clean, pure, delicious. The undescribable.

"Does Baron Dangloss know this man Brutus?" asked Tullis, arising to stand beside her.

A sub-conscious, triumphant thrill shot through him as an instantaneous flash of his own physical superiority over this girl's husband came over him. He was young and strong and vital. He could feel the sensation of being strong; he tingled with the glory of it. He was thirty-five, Marlanx seventy.

He wondered if Marlanx had ever been as strong as he.

"I don't know," she said thoughtfully. "I have not spoken to him concerning Brutus. Perhaps he knows. The baron is very wise. Let me tell you how I happen to know that Peter Brutus is still serving Count Marlanx, and why I think his presence signifies a crisis of some sort."

Tullis stood facing the great fireplace, his back to the hall. He observed that she looked toward the doors quite as often as she looked at him; it struck him that she was extremely cautious despite her apparent ease.

Her voice, always low and even, seemed lower still. "In the first place, I have a faithful friend in one of the oldest retainers at Schloss Marlanx. His daughter is my maid. She is here with me now. The old man came to see Josepha one day last week. He had accompanied Count Marlanx to the town of Balak, which is in Axphain, a mile beyond the Graustark line. Peter Brutus was with my husband in Balak for two days. They were closeted together from morning till night in the house where Marlanx was stopping. At the end of two days, Brutus went away, but he carried with him a vast sum of money provided by my husband. It was given out that he was on his way to Serros, in Dawsbergen, where he expected to purchase a business block for his master. Marlanx waited another day in Balak, permitting Josepha's father to come on to Edelweiss with a message for me and to see his daughter. He——"

"And Josepha's father saw Brutus in Edelweiss?"

"No. But he did see him going into Balak as he left for Edelweiss that morning. He wore a disguise, but Jacob says he could not be mistaken. Moreover, he was accompanied by several men whom he recognized as Graustark mountaineers and hunters of rather unsavory reputation. They left Brutus at the gates of Balak and went off into the hills. All this happened before I knew that Peter was living in Edelweiss. When I saw him here, I

knew at once that his presence meant something sinister. I can put many things together that once puzzled me—the comings and goings of months, the secret reports and consultations, the queer-looking men who came to the castle, the long absences of my husband, and my—my own virtual imprisonment—yes, imprisonment. I was not permitted to leave the castle for days at a time, during his absence."

"Surely you will not go back again to—" he began hotly.

"Sh!" She put a finger to her lips. A manservant was quietly crossing the hall just off the library. "He is a new man. I do not like his appearance."

"Do you think he heard us or observed anything? I can make short work of him if—"

He paused significantly. She smiled up into his face.

"He did not hear anything. We've frightened him off, if he intended to play the eavesdropper." The servant had disappeared through a door at the end of the hall. "Then there were the great sums of money that my husband sent off from time to time, and the strange boxes that came overland to the castle and, later, went away again as secretly as they came. Mr. Tullis, I am confident in my mind that those boxes contained firearms and ammunition. I have thought it all out. Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that I can almost see those firearms stored away in the caves and cabins outside of Edelweiss, ready for instant use when the signal comes."

"God! An uprising? A plot so huge as that?" he gasped, amazed. It is fortunate that he was not facing the door; the same servant, passing once more, might have seen the telltale consternation in his eyes. "It cannot be possible! Why, Dangloss and his men would have scented it long ago."

"I have not said that I am sure of anything, remember that. I leave it to you to analyze. You have the foundation on which to work. I'd advise you to waste no time. Something tells me that the crisis is near at hand."

"Why should Josepha's father tell these things to you?"

"Because, if you will pardon my frankness, I have protected his daughter against Count Marlanx. He understands. And yet he would not betray a trust imposed upon him, even by the count. He has only told me what any one else might have seen with his own eyes. Wait! The new servant is in the hall again." She clapped her hands sharply and called out: "Franz!"

The new man appeared in the doorway almost on the instant.

"You may replenish the fire, Franz."

The man, a sallow, precise fellow, crossed deliberately and poked the half-dead fire; with scrupulous care, he selected two great chunks of wood from the hopper near by and laid them on the coals, the others watching his movements with curious interest. There was nothing about the fellow to indicate that he was other than what he pretended to be.

"Isn't it strange that we should have fires in July?" she asked casually. "The mountain air and the night fogs make it absolutely necessary in these big old houses."

"We had a jolly fire in the prince's room when I left the castle. Our monarch is subject to croup, you see."

"That is all, Franz." The man bowed and left the room. "What do you think of him?" she asked.

"He has a very bad liver," was all Tullis deigned to offer in response. The countess stared for a moment and then laughed understandingly. "I think he needs a change."

"I have a strange feeling that he is but one of a great many men who are in Edelweiss for the purposes I mentioned before. Now, I have a favor to ask of you. Will you take this matter up with Baron Dangloss as if on your own initiative? Do not mention me in any way. You can understand why I ask this of you. Let them believe that the suspicions are yours. I trust you to present them without involving me."

"Trust me, my dear countess. I am

a very diplomatic liar. You need have no fear. I shall find a quick way of getting my friend Dangloss on the right track. It may be a wild-goose chase, but it is best to be on the safe side. May I now tell you how greatly I appreciate your confidence in——”

She stopped him with a glance. “No, you may not tell me. There is nothing more to be said.”

“I think I understand,” he said gently.

“Let us change the subject. I have uttered my word to the wise. *Eh bien!* It may not be so bad as I think. Let us hope so, at least.”

“I have a vague notion that you'd rejoice if we should catch your ogre and chop his head off,” said he, coolly lighting a fresh cigarette. She liked his assurance.

Glancing up at his sandy thatch, she said, with a rueful droop at the corners of her mouth, a contradictory smile in her eyes: “I shall rejoice more if you do not lose your head afterward.”

“*Double entendre?*”

“Not at all.”

“I thought, perhaps, you referred to an unhappy plight that already casts its shadow before,” he said boldly. “I may lose everything else, my dear countess, but *not* my head.”

“I believe you,” she said, strangely serious. “I shall remember that.”

She knew this man loved her.

“Sit down, now, and let us be comfy. We are quite alone,” she added instantly, a sudden confusion coming over her. “First, will you give me that box of candy from the table? Thank you so much for sending it to me. How in the world do you manage to get this wonderful New York candy

all the way to Graustark? It is quite fresh and perfectly delicious.”

“Oh, Fifth Avenue isn't so far away as you think,” he equivocated. “It's just around the corner—of the world. What's eight or nine thousand miles to a district messenger boy? I ring for one and he fetches the candy, before you can wink your eye or say Jack Robinson. It's a marvelous system.”

He watched her white teeth set themselves daintily in the rich nougat; then the red lips closed tranquilly only to open again in a smile of rapture. For reasons best known to himself, he chose not to risk losing the thing he had vowed not to lose. He turned his head—and carefully inspected the end of his cigarette. A wholly unnecessary precaution, as any one might have seen that it was behaving beautifully.

Her eyes narrowed ever so slightly as she studied his averted face in that brief instant. When he turned to her again, she was resting her head against the back of the chair, and her eyes were closed as if in exquisite enjoyment of the morsel that lay behind her smiling lips.

“Are you enjoying it?” he asked.

“Tremendously,” she replied, opening her eyes slowly.

“Gad, I believe you are,” he exclaimed.

She sat up at once, and caught her breath, although he did not know it. His smile distinctly upset her tranquillity.

“By the way,” he added, as if dismissing the matter, “have you forgotten that on Tuesday we go to the witch's hut in the hills? Bobby has dingdonged it into me for days.”

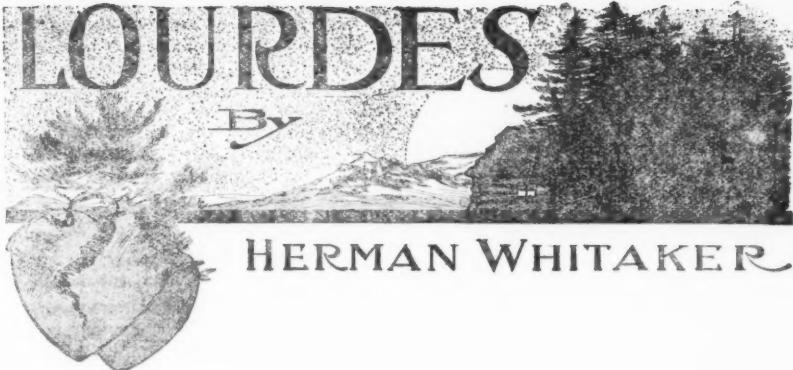
“It will be good fun,” she said. Then, as a swift afterthought: “Be sure that the bodyguard is strong—and true.”

TO BE CONTINUED.



LOURDES

By



HERMAN WHITAKER



EINING his shaganappy ponies, Father Francis pointed his whip at twin spruces which formed the apex of a wooded cape that swept from the far forest out into a golden sea of prairie.

"There's the cause."

I had just commented on the fact that though we were traveling through a country rich and fat-soiled beyond imagination, and which abounded in teal, mallard, widgeon, prairie chicken, every sort of wild fowl; though deer fed in droves like cattle, knee-deep in the richest of pastures, and beaver, mink, otter, rarer fur animals splashed in the woodland lakes, all in the very heart of the Hudson Bay Company's vast domain, we had met neither trapper nor Indian nor seen a habitation since we left the Moose Post yesterday.

"Nor shall we," the priest said, as the ponies settled again to the tireless trot that eats up the miles. "Though it cuts twenty miles off the distance between La Passe and Churchill, the company's people give this trail a wide berth." Nodding at the spruces, he added: "It is twenty years since I was close to them. If you would like it—we have time?"

The deference was eminently characteristic, took out of the same courtesy which had led him to offer me, a

Protestant and a stranger, passage in his buckboard from Fort Churchill—where I was resting after a long hunt for musk ox and caribou of the Barren Lands—to his own mission of La Passe.

And here I am tempted to wander into the story of Father Francis, the great priest who wages war against the devil in man throughout the length and breadth of a parish larger than an old-world kingdom. Returning, however, to the spruces, which we reached after five minutes of rough driving; originally some twelve feet apart, a century's growth had brought the stout trunks almost together. Below, the branches interlaced, but high above, where the tops swung again apart, I easily made out concentric rings of bark, at which the priest was pointing. Aware of the Cree custom of winter burial, I knew that long ago, in their green youth, they had been pulled down to cradle a dead man in his hammock of skins.

"Twenty years ago," Father Francis commented, "a fray of shaganappy fluttered up there in the wind, but I see that the bark has even covered the knot. Then, too, one could make out the outline of a double grave. The rains and gophers have wiped it out. Soon the trees themselves will go. Yet—what a wonderful thing is memory!—when they and we shall have passed away, unborn generations, Indian and white, will still avoid this place. Let us drive on to the old fort."

A half mile's southing, parallel with the trail, brought us to it—all that was left, for what wind and weather had spared the prairie fires had taken. Fur houses, cabins, stockade, and stores, all were gone. Where the factor and clerk, trappers and traders once lived and loved, fought or chaffered with the wild tribes that brought down the furry spoil of the far north, a dozen or so of old mud chimneys now uprose from rank grass growths, accentuating the loneliness of that lovely land by suggesting the hospitable fires that once blazed within their crumbled arches.

"A story here?" the priest repeated my question, driving on. "Surely, but if you will have patience until to-morrow, you shall have it from one who will tell it better than I."

Now, if ever face evidenced sensibility, sympathy, and humor in proportions that would insure a well-told story, it was surely his. It would have been hard to find better occasion—either then or when, that night, our fire twinkled, a wee red star under the enormous black vault above. It would have beguiled the long hours of travel next day. But even if our acquaintance had not been too recent for me to urge him, a certain finality, a touch of decision lurked in his smile. Moreover, what of his gossip of men and things as he had seen them during forty years in the Northland, time slid by unnoticed both then and the following day.

To tell the truth, I had forgotten the promised story when, next evening, he brought a sheepskin tome to me where I sat smoking before a great fire in the mission kitchen.

"The Abbé du Fre!" I exclaimed, after one glance at the close knit of delicate writing.

"You have heard of him?" And when I confessed to having made his acquaintance in the records of St. Boniface, the good priest nodded. "Yes, they contain most of his writings—though he was no niggard. In the company's log books, our mission records, wherever in fact white paper and black ink occurred together, he was seized with the *furor scribendi*. He

was a writer born, and though he would have scouted the very idea, some sneaking consciousness of the fact inheres in his elaborately apologetic prefaces. Had his lot been cast in Europe, where letters are not considered so scandalously idle, he would surely have made his mark. And now, as I have some matters to attend, you will please excuse me. I leave you in good company with the abbé and your pipe."

To that good fellowship he might have added the fire which leaped and crackled on the wide mud hearth warmly illuminating the dark ceiling balks, the time-stained log walls. He did pause at the door to add: "It will increase your pleasure to know that not only was the story written here, but these old walls chambered its principal event."

And with this thought in the forefront of my mind I opened the book.

It was not my original intention to record the events here set down, the familiar preface ran, events which I had thought buried in the past until Israel, one of our hunters, burst in upon us as I sat at meat with Mr. Temple, the governor, who arrived at La Passe this evening. Pale from fright and utterly exhausted by a night and a day of hard running, he was just able to tell how, while stalking a moose that was feeding on the lush grass beneath the "Twin Spruces" north of the old Park Post, he had seen a man come out from the ruins; a tall man who staggered beneath the weight of the woman whom he bore on his shoulders. At that first glance Israel sensed something unusual, and when they passed him—so close that he could have touched them with his gun—some intuition of the truth held him still and silent; the intuition which developed into certainty when the moose continued to feed quietly, though the man passed it equally close on his way to the trees; the truth that, upon the instant, set his feet upon the fastest trail of his life. And I say "truth" in the face of Mr. Temple's skeptical suggestion that Israel had come upon some Cree carrying his dead squaw to the place of burial.

"Nonsense, father!" he laughed. "The rankest kind of nonsense. Why should one ghost pack round another when it could earn good money transporting my furs?" Withal which railery, he was greatly impressed by the story, exclaiming at the end that I should deserve hanging or worse if I let it go unrecorded. Indeed, he took me by the shoulders and set me down to the writing, with orders to have it ready for his eye before he left next morning.

For the beginnings of it all I have to go back eight years in time, a few hundred miles in distance, to the occasion when I drove in to the Prairie Portage with Father Beaupré, then priest of that mission; and as I recall it, the day stands out for its preëminent beauty as much as for the fact that it marked my first glimpse of Lourdes. Late summer, a gentle breeze tempered the heat and sent brighter waves across the yellow prairies, so that we journeyed as through a golden sea all chased and fretted with shadows of the soft fleeces which sailed high in the blue above. To increase my enjoyment, while we rattled along in a big-wheeled Red River cart, the good priest poured into my ear a report so lengthy and encouraging, that we passed from the dead flat of the Garry prairies into the woodland country around the south end of Lake Manitoba without noticing the change.

"Sixteen Cree converts, half a score Sioux, ten girl communicants—" I remember his tale was at flood when, with dull clatter of unshod hoofs, a white girl child on an unbridled pony dashed out upon us from behind a poplar bluff.

"Lourdes! What does this mean?" the priest cried out angrily as the pony stopped of its own volition.

For the child was naked.

At the time I confess to a feeling of shocked confusion. But looking backward, the picture she made is the prettiest in a long life. Brown-eyed and delicately featured, her flesh, of a pure ivory white, shone whiter by contrast

with masses of red-bronze hair that already fell to her waist. Though only twelve, her healthy development already promised the luxury which, later, made such a stir in the forts; and as she sat her ragged pony staring us with wide dark eyes, the slim whiteness of her in outline against the dark green of a bluff, I could very well understand the old Greek passion for flesh.

"It is this son of a devil!" she answered, in voluble French. "You see, it is that he is so very dirty and requires the wash. But when I try to ride him into the lake, he shies like Jean, my brother, at the sight of soap, and being unbridled, turns and bolts." Digging small heels into the rough ribs, she added an emphatic: "Oh, wicked one!"

"He seems quiet enough now?" Father Beaupré doubted.

"Because he is well breathed. Now I shall go back for my clothes—extra labor for thee, sinful!" And turning the beast with a kick, delivered sideways upon one eye, she drove in her heels and flew off down the wind.

"And is she of the ten girl communicants?"

I was sorry for the dig when he replied with a groan: "I am rightly served for my boasting. She? Lourdes, daughter of the new factor, sent here, as it seems, to be a thorn in the side of my vanity."

After he had related a few of her pranks I could well believe it; an opinion which gained strength with the following years. Indeed, it became my habit to inquire first of Lourdes upon my annual visit; or did I omit it, the tale was at the tip of Father Beaupré's tongue—to be told with a smile or grimace according to his distance from its point. Once she had been captured in the ditch behind the stockade, where—having first stolen an altar cloth to drape the victim and lend verisimilitude to the ceremony—she was about to subject a cat to the *auto-da-fé* in imitation of the Virgin Martyrs.

Again, it was she who cut the rawhide thongs which bound the sled of that Presbyterian divine who came to

this country in the train of Lord Selkirk, did it so cleverly that the poor gentleman was miles upon his road before he found himself sitting like a fallen prophet among the pieces.

Later, her tricks grew more intimate, usually bit deep on some one—as when she stole the watch of Donald, the Scotch clerk, from its nail in the store and gave it to a young Cree squaw, telling her that Donald's wife, who was notoriously jealous, would buy it for thrice its value in flour and bacon. Donald's beard grew gray over that prank, and while he was still explaining Lourdes shot up to her years. Leaving her one fall a lithe barelegged lass who raced my ponies from the cross trails in to the mission without harm to her breathing, I returned next season to find her a woman.

And such a woman! The skirts, that had dropped so suddenly from her knees, fluttered above tiny moccasins which would have been a tight fit for my hand. Her carriage was something to see, head gracefully poised, with an uptilt of the round, firm chin, full torso curved in to the small waist, which swayed above fine hips with the easy flexures, perfect rhythms of youth. Already I have spoken of her whiteness that had the firm pure quality of ivory; in the midst of which imagine eyes that shone like young moons, all within the frame of her wonderful hair. I could well understand Father Beaupré's answer to my comment on her looks.

"Behold your thorn has developed a rose!"

"Ay, but it is still there—to prick the sharper for being hidden. Already she has sent one man to his grave, and when I am not busy shriveling such of her lovers as are beyond my rough surgery, then I am listening to confessions of the sin of the eye from men whose penance might very well be left to their wives. There will be no peace till she is safely married to a strong man; for should she go to a weakling, the shrivings will increase, the confessions grow worse. However," he finished his grumble, "things

point well. Gabriel, the Little, is after her, and as he always gets what he wants, he'll have her—sooner or later."

Concerning this Gabriel—whose nickname was one half jest—now needs a word. Really above medium height, he was very broad, deep-chested, and possessed that natural strength which is as wonderful as unexplainable; force pulsed through his tough muscles. On a long portage, I have seen him pack his four hundred pounds upstream knee-deep among slippery boulders. With one hand he could tie Gabriel, the Tall, his long, lean namefellow, in a double knot, and even Mr. Fraser, of Devil's Drum, the strongest man in the Northland, counted him a fair antagonist in the wrestle. When, of evening, the young men would race canoes along the lake, he would take Lourdes and bring her in, flushed and laughing, ahead of the others in their empty birchbark shells; and as ours is a country where bodily vigor makes for more profit than mental parts, it would be no wonder if he had not won on her.

As a sudden influenza laid me by the heels for a month, I was able to pass on his chances myself; and when, one day, I watched the flame come and go in Lourdes' face as, one after the other, Gabriel forced every strong shoulder to the ground in a wrestling bout before the store, I saw that they were good. Despite the mad teasing with which she met his every attempt at actual love, I believe that summer would have seen them married if the governor had not picked him out for the factorship of the new fort of Painted Post.

As the order fell in with my recovery and our ways lay together, I was witness of their parting, for Lourdes rode out with us a half day's journey; nor could one imagine aught so beautiful as she at the moment she drew up her pony to say good-by. Bathed in sunshine, which crowned her with a flaming aureole, wrapped her ripe youth in a golden mantle, she made a figure rich, gracious, glorious as though limned in the soft stain of a window. I did not wonder at the yearning of

Gabriel's dark face, the note of strain that changed his voice.

"Six months to build the fort, little one; three to set it in order, then I shall return to—"

"Find me hard and fast married," she laughingly interrupted.

But the tenderness of her smile belied the mischief in her eyes. It was to them he made his finish: "To end this fooling with our marriage. Till then, *à Dieu*."

"*A Dieu*," she answered, so soberly that I looked back and thus saw the laughter die in her eyes, leaving them darkly serious under the red flame of her hair. If that had been the return?

My usual routine would have carried me nor'west by Manitoba House to the Ellice Mission—where Gabriel left me—thence due north by Fort Pelly to Norway House, the La Passe Mission, and so round the Arctic stations to celebrate mass in the Barren Lands that lie under the midnight sun, returning at the end of a year from Fort McCloud in the west by a southern trail. But owing to a severer recurrence of influenza, I turned back two months later at Bedford House in Athabasca, arriving at the Portage on my homeward way a sick man, yet not so sick but that I had eyes for the second chapter of Lourdes' romance.

It opens on the afternoon that, making in to the Portage by a new trail which promised a short cut through a bit of woodland, I almost drove over Lourdes and Luke Stevens, the English clerk who was recently come out to serve out his indentures under Donald Blair. They were returning home from a lovers' ramble—yes, in that short time; indeed the speed of the wooing may be gauged by the fact that upon this third day of the fourth week of their acquaintance, his arm clasped her waist. Her bright head pressed in to his shoulder, they were pacing it in love's slow time, so wrapped in each other that they missed my wheels; and so afforded time for me to take a good look at Luke.

A tall lad—man, rather, he had turned twenty-six, and yet the word

comes out of that first impression—he was very strongly built and carried himself with that certain distinction of manner much loved by women. Afterward, I heard that he came on one side of a noble family on the under side of the knot. For himself he claimed issue from that upper middle class which exiles its sons to the colonies through prejudice against trade; which, if true, makes for his credit in that he lacked even a taint of the ridiculously superior airs of that useless breed. Altogether I was favorably impressed until, turning at my cough, he reversed the usual habit and flew the woman's crimson. Then I saw that his eyes, while large and true blue, were much too soft for a man who had to make his way in our rough land; and it was to hide a sudden misgiving as much as in play that I shook my whip at Lourdes, whose white teeth had flashed like sudden pearls amidst the scarlet of her lips. I was troubled without knowing why until, that evening, Father Beaupre put my feeling into words.

"A good lad, a fine lad," the priest said, as we talked it over. "Donald says that he never broke a better. But—too soft for Lourdes. For, look ye, this may be heresy, but it is also sense—a spice of the devil in a husband may sometimes cause a slip, yet in the long run it makes for the good of the church by causing others to 'ware his women. But would you have thought she'd have taken to him?"

It did seem strange that his gentleness should prevail with this madcap savage in whom Gabriel's iron had stirred only liking, and if there be answer to the puzzle it must inhere in the fact that were it otherwise and like mated only with like, we should be quickly bred into oaks and saplings; there could be no commingling of strength with the graces. Dame Nature may be trusted with her own business. But, curious or no, love him Lourdes did, with a love that bordered on ferocity and would brook no laggard wooing. I married them within a month, after a courtship short as it had been ideal.

Over a golden land that swooned under the languors of Indian summer, they had rambled, pausing often to observe, from grassy knolls, the badgers and other prairie children at their loves and wars. When, of evenings, I had strolled with the good priest along the quiet lake shore, we had often caught the slow dip of a paddle far out on the water; or, low, rich, bubbling with her joy of life, Lourdes' laugh would throb through the warm dusk, followed by silence so soft and suggestive that even we dry old churchmen would exchange glances of indulgent understanding.

And their honeymoon had been equally ideal. I have always pitied those whose nuptials are cast amidst the toil and traffic, smoke and noise of cities; the poor souls who flee the regard of friends to expose their natural shyness to the vulgar, brazen stare of a crowded caravansary. But the deep woods cradled theirs, and did the autumn leaves crimson over the tale they whispered to the grasses, there was none but a startled fawn to spread the tale through the forest. For they went off on a long hunting which outlasted my stay, and when I returned the following year, they had settled down in the face of Father Beaupré's croaking to what seemed an unusually happy life.

"Which merely goes to show," he then said, amending his wisdom to suit the new case, "what I have observed before—it is your madcap girls who make the best of wives."

Concerning Gabriel? Were I aught but a plain chronicler of events, here would be fine soil in which to sow the seed of future occasion by telling of his vow to be revenged. As a matter of fact he took the news very quietly, being helped, perhaps, by the fact that it had had three months to ripen while drifting in to his far fort. In either case, he plunged at his work with ardor which must have won him both peace and reputation in the ordinary course of events.

Wherewith I am brought face to face with a fortuitous providence, find myself in presence of one of those mys-

teries over which priest and layman may puzzle themselves into spiritual blindness without obtaining a glimpse of the solution which is reserved for the eye of faith. Here were two men, ordinarily good, whose lives would have run in usual channels but for the chance that made two widows, while it drowned at once the factor and clerk of the Park Lands Post in the same rapid. For with the order that sent Luke north and Gabriel east to fill the respective vacancies, things were set in train toward the inevitable conclusion. The future, however, cast no shadow upon that bright spring day when, very happy in the promotion, they rode out from the Portage with two Red River carts creaking behind under the weight of their housekeeping.

And now the tale comes by many mouths—through Father John, whom I relieved for sickness the following winter, from trappers and traders passing between mission and fort, its end by Gabriel himself; but here the mosaic is fused in a whole which begins with the arrival at the Park Lands Post.

To Lourdes, the journey had been one long joy. After the dead flats of Southern Manitoba, the alternation of rolling prairie, frequent rivers, wide valley, black spruce forest, which gave the Park Lands their name, must have appeared to her as fairyland; and did she tire of the prospect, there were pleasant thoughts of the hospitable folk at the post where they had stayed the preceding night, or she could occupy herself with curious speculations upon those she would meet at the next. Being a woman, excessively pretty at that, it goes without saying that, analyzed, her thought centred upon the impression she had made on one, was about to make on the other. Once at La Passe, within fifty miles of her future home, her curiosity naturally concentrated upon it, and she simply bombarded Father John with questions concerning the factor and folk of the post. As, however, the priest had not been there since the coming of the new men, he could tell her nothing. Wherefore,

imagine her surprise when Gabriel came out to meet them as their carts creaked in through the gates two days later.

Be sure that she hid it better than he, for Jean le Gros, who saw, said afterward that Gabriel stood on gape till, having introduced himself, Luke turned to do the like for his wife. Then he burst out laughing. "Why, we are old friends!" he cried, and while showing them to their quarters, he asked after her parents, Father Beaupré, myself, in friendly fashion; bore himself in all things like the strong, sane man he then was.

Better that he had been harsher. Viewing his conduct under the strong light that beats on the past, one wishes, while admiring him for it, that he had driven them forth with blows—for which he would not have lacked a precedent in the Northland. But, as I say, he not only gave them honest welcome, but even took to Luke like a brother. As they were both new men, with a record to make between them, they hunted together near and wide, using the same blankets on long trails into the heart of the Barren Lands in search of furs; and what of their long absences abroad, preoccupations of business at home, Lourdes found herself almost a widow that summer—that very much against her will.

For when did woman overlook the cooling of love? A belief in the fatal nature of the gentle malady is ineradicably planted in the breast of the sex which never forgives even a hint of convalescence in lover, husband, or, as in Lourdes' case, both. Had Luke's passion remained at the fever heat which women persist in regarding as normal, she might have passed Gabriel's defection. But when both old lover and new husband neglected a skin whiter than winter snows, to hang over evil-smelling pelts, she first fell into the sulks, then, emerging, displayed a dangerous animation. It was at this period that Father John heard her, one day, tease Gabriel, ask if disappointed love were responsible for his wifeless condition. Only the other day Jean le

Gros, the trapper, was recalling how he had seen her make occasion to touch his hand passing a plate at table.

"Touch him?" Jean exclaimed. "Once it was that I saw her reach both hands over his shoulders to take up an empty platter. As her hands came together upon it, his head was brought in for a moment against her breast, and though he bent low over his plate, I saw the black blood flood his neck. In the few days I stayed thereafter, she was denuo as a house cat in forestallment of aught that might come out of that bold lead. But a great mischief had been done. Coming into the fur house, I would find him glooming when he should have been busy with cord and stilyards getting the pack ready for my trail. Nor had he picked up to his usual when I left with the fur train for Garry."

And matters were at this pass when the "Great Blizzard" cut us of La Passe off from them and the rest of the world.

In explanation of that terrible winter, I have heard Mr. Temple say that it was caused by the unusual heat of an Antipodeal summer which sucked up vast vapors from the South Pacific. Be which as it may, the snows came from north, south, east, west, till the prairies were buried two yards deep and the drifts banked fifty feet over the bluffs; and did the incessant fall lighten for a few hours, then fierce winds gathered the loose drift freighting it hither and thither, tossed it and churned it till earth, air, and sky were one white smother. Around the fort, the prairies rolled, a great blank sheet, expressionless as the voids of space, swept clean of life; for wolves, foxes, all of the four-legged that do not hibernate, had traveled south with the ptarmigan to where thinner snows would permit the one an occasional rabbit, the other a cropful of frozen berries; and as the last Cree trapper left before the storm broke—either to follow the moose which had retired to their trampled yards in the heart of the spruce a month before their usual, or to hurry down to Garry, where the company

would save them alive for next year's hunting—the three were walled up with their passions in whirling clouds of snow.

Had the winter been upon the ordinary, with cold, clear spells between storms, their isolation would not have weighed so heavily. While Gabriel ran to and fro on a fifty-mile string of traps, Luke would have been reasonably busy caring for the skins. Moreover, some one or other from La Passe would have occasionally dropped in. But for three months—three long white months, the first week of which saw Luke's books and stores in perfect order, guns, firs, clothing, all cleaned, oiled or mended—no snowshoe broke on that trail; and as Lourdes had borne no child to keep herself employed and them entertained by its prattlings, there was nothing left but to sit around the fire and talk, or, what was more dangerous, think, think, think, while the roaring winds freighted the ceaseless snows outside.

As aforesaid, Lourdes had screwed up her pretty lips to blow on the live coals of Gabriel's passion before ever the snows locked them in. With a woman's fondness for playing with fire, it was this dangerous time that she chose to fan it to a flame by her attempts at revenge for their indifference during the summer.

From Gabriel himself comes the tale of how, seating herself on Luke's knee, she would alternately tease and fondle him, pull his hair and beard, caress him with small pats and pushes, always with intervening velvet glances at the silent man on the other side of the hearth. Of evenings, she would let her hair fall, a cataract of ruddy gold in the fire's red glare, and comb out the shimmering masses whose perfume rose strong in his nostrils. While flouting him with her beauty, she would tease him with merry words and mischievous glances, thrusting, probing his dark quiet for the old sore.

And often she touched it. With a bitter oath, he described how, flinging out from the fire into the storm, he would pace for hours in the black

smother, nor dared retire to the frozen silence of his lonely hut till exhaustion had killed both sense and thought. But he always returned next day—to the lure of her ivory beauty.

Why did Luke permit it? A sterner man would have quickly checked her levities, but in him was no particle of that saving salt, the spice of deviltry of Father Beaupré's yearnings. Spurred during this slack time to some recurrence of lover's warmth, he first encouraged and still submitted to her fondlings long after Gabriel's old friendliness had changed to a sullen moroseness. Albeit with many an uneasy glance at the dark, silent man who brooded by their fire, he accepted and returned her fondlings. Whereafter picture them: The woman busy with her thoughtless revenges, coaxing and teasing the old lover in whom life was transmuted into one long desire, the new husband whose soft blue eyes presently reflected the dawn of an ever-growing fear. For in that surcharged atmosphere thought pulsed freely without intervention of words.

In ignorance of that old relation—of which, for some woman's reason, Lourdes had not informed him—Luke came to know Gabriel's mind. Imagine them, I say, sitting out the long days and longer nights under such stress of feeling that Gabriel could not move without causing Luke a start; imagine that nervous atmosphere deepening, intensifying until, surcharged, it was primed for the explosion that overwhelmed them in a storm of passion and fear on Christmas night.

In a double sense, a lull preceded the storm. First, the drift lifted that morning long enough for Luke and Gabriel to dash over to the forest and return laden with green boughs. While they were gone, Lourdes had ransacked the stores to provide a feast, and, combining with the glow induced by wholesome exercise, the seasonable associations helped to dispel for a few hours the unhealthy vapors of that long brooding. At table they were merry, and if Luke had not obliged Lourdes to taste the punch he brewed as they sat

around the fire that evening, the healthier spirit might have endured—perhaps through the winter.

One glass, however, small at that, was sufficient to loose the spirit of wantonness which had made her first the plague, then a thorn in the flesh of the forts. Sipping it—so slowly that she was able to drink without refilling to Gabriel's last toast—her mischievous glance wandered between him and a cluster of pale winter berries that Luke had hung above the hearth in lieu of mistletoe. As he called the toast, moreover, "The old home, old folks, old friends," she rose and standing under the mistletoe in the glow of the fire which wrapped her ripe beauty in a red mantle, she looked at him over the top of her glass: "And old loves."

As aforesaid, exercise and good cheer had brought Gabriel a healthier mood early in the day, but the associations of that hearth were too strong to be long banished. While the invisible vapors of thought were settling again upon him, the liquor had been at work weakening the will power which had reined his passion. The flushes that had followed her sly glances now merged in a burst of feeling. Springing up, he forced her head back and, holding her throat with one powerful hand, crushed his lips upon the scarlet mouth, smothering her broken cry. Despite her struggles, he kissed and kissed and kissed until, exhausted, she hung limp as a dead deer across his arm. Then, lifting her upon her feet, he looked quietly on while, turning, she stared at Luke with eyes that seemed to spread like storm-fed pools across her face's whiteness.

Through all Luke had looked on with a sickly smile, the shamed grin which accentuates the cowardly discomfiture it seeks to excuse and conceal. "Christmas license," he now began, was going on to excuse the rape of her lips when she stopped him with a sudden swinging blow that bathed his mouth in blood. And as, with a wild cry: "You dog! Oh, you slinking dog!" she flew across the floor to her bedroom, it was borne in upon Gabriel

that, despite the restless devil behind her coquettices, she had been loyal in thought.

"Just a bit of temper." As Luke's eyes came back from the closed door, his bloody mouth drew into a second uneasy grin. "Let's finish the punch."

But giving him a look that caused his soft eyes to seek the floor, Gabriel flung outside—to pace it in company with thoughts that would no longer be denied, to thrill to vivid remembrances of the soft velvet of her lips, to fling wide arms to the embrace of the black storm, to glow, later, at the vision which formed in the frozen darkness of his cabin, the vision which took form in purpose next day, the purpose that sent him flying outside when, in the forenoon, he saw through thin drift Lourdes come out to draw water at the ice-bound well.

He had often helped her draw, but as, on his approach, she stayed the frosty windlass, he saw in her eyes a reflection of his purpose. "I am to come to your cabin?" Her laugh, repeating his words, rang sharp as the broken icicles that tinkled down the well. Her answer, "Come tell that to my—husband," carried neither anger nor reprobation. She laughed again as he spoke.

"Very well. Leave the pails. We need water in my cabin."

It is a habit of writers to blacken much paper with vivid descriptions of deadly occasions, but, according to Gabriel's report, the following scene could not have passed more quietly had it witnessed the simple transfer of a maid from one to another service. On their entrance Luke looked up from his chair by the fire, revealing glazed blood-shot eyes that told of his attempts to drown his shame. A single fitful glance conveyed his full knowledge that the fear which had dogged him these long weeks now stood openly at his hearth.

"He says that I must go to his cabin?"

Ensued a long pause, and as she stood, looking down upon the other, Gabriel felt once more that if he would

rise to his manhood, she would fight at his side. But—with a knife in his belt, his gun close to his hand—he continued his drunken stare at the fire, the bulk of him relaxed in a huddled heap; and Gabriel saw the dark doubt, the troubled question of her look wiped out by immeasurable scorn. Turning, she brought her clothing out of the bedroom, but he did not look up then, or when, having tied her bundle, she followed Gabriel out of the cabin.

And now must be set down that which may seem impossible to all but the priest whose vocation it is to fathom the incomprehensibilities of human nature. Who shall measure the passion of shame which could cause the poltroon who had quietly suffered the theft of his wife to rise above his cowardly fear and advance his hand against his own life? As, having crossed the fort yard, Lourdes stepped over Gabriel's threshold, a muffled report drove through the drift to their ears. So sure was Gabriel that the shot had been aimed at himself, he let the water pails fall with a clatter as he whirled around. But the door which he had closed behind him loomed through the drift, a blank face whose wooden immobility yet contained a hint of the tragedy it concealed. While rapidly retracing his steps, Gabriel was aware—vividly as though he had already seen it—of the figure stretched at length across the hearth.

The bullet had pierced both temples. On his knees beside him, Gabriel felt of the wounds, nor has Mr. Temple's explanation that bullets have been known to glance and travel around the head beneath the skin, been able to shake my faith in his testimony. The man was surely dead.

In his haste, Gabriel had not noticed that Lourdes had followed; was unaware of her presence until, looking up as she spoke, he caught the bitter hardness of her look.

"He was a dog."

She even spurned him. It was her hands, moreover, that lashed him in his buffalo robes for winter burial. When, late in the afternoon, the drift lifted

for an hour, she followed the dog sled that bore him over the blank snowscape to the twin spruces which grew a half mile north of the fort. Her weight was thrown with Gabriel's upon the rawhide ropes which pulled the springy tops down to the ground. She helped to lash him there in his hammock of skins. It was her knife that freed the trees to rise with their grisly burden above the snows. Through all her face had maintained its fixed hardness, only, returning, her dark eyes turned curiously upon Gabriel. As, that evening, she moved around his cabin cooking the meal which neither ate; when, later, they drew up to the fire and fell to a gloomy study of the coals, he felt her glance touch, enwrap him with dark question, which presently merged in knowledge; knowledge of the mind he was to lay bare to me at La Passe three days thereafter.

Though she was there at his fire, the sough of the storm in the chimney, rattle of door and window, wail of the wind outside, were inseparably associated with the long days, longer nights, they had spent at that other hearth. Now, as then, a third sat between them—a figure thin, impalpable, yet so real that did Gabriel but glance Lourdes' way, he caught again the familiar nervous start, saw the fear dawn in Luke's pale eyes. In this hour which witnessed the realization of his hot dreams, the husband still guarded his wife, and Gabriel knew that her ripe beauty was not for him. Had the passion which burned in his veins been ten times heated, he could not have passed that pale shadow, have abridged the distance between himself and the woman by a single inch. He knew it; harder to bear, he knew that she knew it and triumphed in his fear.

"You bade me to your cabin—I am here?" her look continually taunted. Sometimes, too, he could have sworn that she was trying to tempt him. But if a sigh or little look drew his quick glance, it was the coquetry of hate; he caught only the mocking flash of hard, resentful eyes. Thus while the slow hours drew into the night they

sat, he studying the coals, she him—sat until, just after a heavier gust had caused her to look round, she sprang up, eyes dilated with horror and fear, pointing at the window. Whirling at her cry, Gabriel also saw a face pressed against the black pane, its pale eyes empty of thought, though seeing, its mouth set in a vacuous grin—the face of Luke staring them out of whorl of gray drift.

In Gabriel's own mind that which followed in the next minute was blurred and indistinct. A hunter of the company since his head leveled his father's waist, his gun always went of itself to his shoulder, his bullet to its mark. While he stood, eyes glued to the horrible face, he was not conscious of reaching his gun down from its pegs on the chimney above the hearth. He did hear Lourdes' terrible cry "Luke!" and afterward recalled a fleeting impression that she thought the thing alive. He knew that she must have sprung forward as he fired, to clutch the gun, but the first clear picture comes when, as the smoke lifted, he saw her lying at his feet, a beautiful ruin of a woman shrouded in red-bronze hair.

Sitting here years afterward before a bright fire, with people moving about the house, I freeze as I picture him raising eyes from the dead woman to encounter again the stare of that awful face. It is easy to understand the obsession of terror that sent him, a trapper born, flying out of that room, forth from the fort, to circle and recircle like any lost child. Whereas, in his senses, he would have steered by the wind, he now plunged forward in his mad desire to put distance between himself and the fort; and as none but an Indian—who places one foot always directly in front of the other—may walk in a straight line by night, it is small wonder that his circlings brought him back again. Ignorant of which, he dug his way hours later into the heart of a drift, and what of complete exhaustion of body and mind, sank into a coma that outlasted the night. In-

deed he did not wake till roused by a vibration on the crust of the snow.

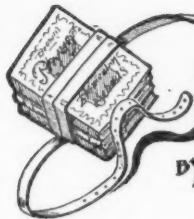
While he slept a furious wind had packed the drift so hard that he had to put all of his great strength into a mighty heave before, bursting up like a ptarmigan from its nest under the snow, he saw the fort stockade looming darkly through thin drift. Nearer, within fifty yards, a man was approaching, footing it easily over the hard crust. At the first glance Gabriel knew him. A second gave him the long hair that trailed down from his shoulders, proclaiming the burden under which he bowed.

The dead was burying his dead—yet Gabriel did not move. An image of death himself, for the night's frost had fixed his face in a white mask wherein only the eyes moved, he watched them go by. As he passed, the grim porter turned his head, revealing the empty eyes, the vacuous smile. For a second he paused and Gabriel thought the lips twitched toward speech. Then, with a beckoning nod, he moved on, steering straight for the twin spruces in the distance.

Two days thereafter came the first real break in the weather, and it was while snowshoeing north to end the three months' silence which had obtained between the folk at the post and us of La Passe that Jean Baptise and I came upon Gabriel stumbling south. The bitter frosts of a second night had frozen his legs to the knees. His arms were solid to the shoulder. As aforesaid, his eyes sparkled in a set white mask. Never have I seen a man so terribly frozen. But it was mercifully decreed that he should not die by the torture of gangrene; a greater cold had seized on his heart.

"He called me, father," he said. "And I must go—to finish out the play on the other side. But I could not die, unshriven, out here in the snows."

Nor did he. It was a clean soul—clean of its passion, anger, tears, that passed out from the mission late the following night.



OUT OF SCHOOL

BY P. G. WODEHOUSE



ARK you, I am not defending James Datchett. I think James should not have done it. I merely say that there were extenuating circumstances.

Let us review the matter calmly and judicially.

The fact was that James, who was assistant master at Mr. Blatherwick's private school, at a small but sufficient salary, was also a poet. In his Harvard days he had contributed light verse to a college magazine; and for some months past now he had been endeavoring to do the same to the papers of New York, without success until that very morning.

I want you to follow me very closely here. As far as the excusing of James' conduct is concerned, it is now or never. If I fail at this point to touch you, James is, if I may use the expression, definitely in the soup.

Let me marshal my facts.

It was a simply bully morning.

James had just found a set of verses of his in print in a monthly magazine.

This had never happened to him before.

He was twenty-two.

And, just as he rounded the angle of the house, he came upon Violet, taking the air like himself.

"Good morning, sir," said Violet.

Violet was one of the housemaids, a trim, energetic little person with round blue eyes and a friendly smile. She smiled at James as she spoke. James halted.

From my list of contributory causes I find that I have omitted one item, viz.,

that there did not appear to be anybody else about. In another moment the deed was done. James stooped, and—in a purely brotherly manner—kissed Violet.

This, of course, was wrong. It was no part of James' duties as assistant master at Harrow House to wander about kissing housemaids, even in a brotherly manner. On the other hand, there was no great harm done. In the circles in which Violet moved the kiss was equivalent to the handshake of loftier society. Everybody who came to the back door kissed Violet. The expressman did; so did the baker, the butcher, the grocer, the gardener, the postman, the policeman, and the fishmonger. They were men of widely differing views on most points. On religion, politics, and the prospects of the Giants in next Saturday's ball game their opinions clashed. But in one respect they were unanimous. Whenever they came to the back door of Harrow House, they all kissed Violet.

James passed on; and Violet, having sniffed the morning air for a few more minutes with her tilted nose, went indoors to attend to her work. One would have said that the incident was closed.

But retribution was on James' track. And the weapon she chose was Adolf.

One is forced to the conclusion that retribution must have been hard up for a weapon, for a more ignoble ally than Adolf it would have been hard to find.

He was one of that numerous band of Swiss and German youths who come to this country prepared to give their services ridiculously cheap in exchange for the opportunity of learning the

English language. Mrs. Blatherwick, the masterful wife of the proprietor of Harrow House, had urged upon her husband the advantages of male servants over female as front door openers. Mrs. Blatherwick's view was that the parents of prospective pupils would be impressed at the sight of a man in livery. She would have liked something a bit more imposing than Adolf, but he was the best that could be got for the money. So Adolf came to Harrow House.

Had he not done so, he could not, of course, have witnessed from an upper window, as he did, the brotherly behavior of James Datchett. As it was, he got a most excellent view of it, and retired, grinning like a gargoyle, to turn the thing over in his mind, and see what profit he might derive from the same.

James, meanwhile, ostensibly at his desk teaching a bored class the rudiments of Latin composition, was in spirit miles away from Harrow House. He was in the office of an important magazine, being warmly welcomed by the editor, whom he had consented to supply with light verse on the most advantageous terms.

The blow fell after tea, when, being off duty for an hour, he was smoking a pipe in his bedroom and trying to knock off a set of verses on a topical subject. Adolf's entry just nipped in the bud a rather happy idea for the second stanza. He glared at the intruder.

"Well?" he growled. Poets are notoriously irritable.

"Anysing from ze fillage, sare?" said Adolf. The bulk of Adolf's perquisites was derived from the tips he received for going to the village for tobacco, stamps, and so on.

"No. Get out," said James.

He was surprised to find that Adolf, so far from getting out, came in and shut the door.

"Zst!" said Adolf, with a finger on his lips.

James stared.

"In ze garden zis morning, I did zee you giss Violed. Zo!"

James' heart missed a beat. His present situation was not lavishly remunerated, but it was all that he had; and he knew the difficulty of obtaining posts in the scholastic world. If this worm were to give him away to Mr. Blatherwick, he would be lost. Mr. Blatherwick was an austere man. He would not overlook such a crime. And, in the very improbable event of his doing so, Mrs. Blatherwick would not. James gulped. If he got dismissed from Harrow House, he would have to go and live at home until he found another post; and he remembered without pleasure his father's views, expressed nightly after dinner, on Young Men Who Ought To Be Earning Their Own Livings Instead Of Idling At Home. James had not the slightest desire to return to the ranks of the Y. M. W. O. T. B. E. T. O. L. I. O. I. A. H.

"What do you mean?" he said hoarsely.

"In ze garten. You und Violed! Zo!" And Adolf, in the worst taste, gave a realistic imitation of the scene, himself sustaining the rôle of James.

"Well?" said James. There seemed nothing else to say.

"Lizzun! Berhaps I dell Herr Blatherwig. Berhaps I do nod. It all tepend."

James appealed to his chivalry.

"I don't care about myself," he said, "but, say, you don't want to lose the poor girl her job. They'd be bound to throw her down, too."

Adolf's eyes gleamed.

"Zo! Lissun! When I do first gom here, I to Violed do say, 'I would giss you, Violed,' and my arm I put round her waisdt—zo. But she do push ze zide of my face, und my lof is turned to hate."

James listened attentively to this tabloid tragedy, but made no comment. There was silence for a moment.

"Anysing from ze fillage, sare?" Adolf's voice was meaning. James produced a quarter.

"Here you are, then. Get me a two-cent stamp, and keep the change."

"A doo-zent stdamp, sare? Yes, sare, I vill vly at vunce."

James' last impression of the departing one was a vast and greasy grin, stretching most of the way across his face.

Adolf, as blackmailer, in which rôle he now showed himself, differed in some respects from the conventional blackmailer of fiction. It may be that he was doubtful as to how much James would stand for, or it may be that his soul as a general rule was above money. At any rate, in actual specie he took very little from James. He seemed to wish to be sent to the village oftener than before, but that was all. A dollar a week would have covered James' financial loss.

But he asserted himself in another way. In his most light-hearted moments Adolf never forgot the reason which had brought him to America. He had come to the country to learn the language, and he meant to do it. The difficulty which had always handicapped him hitherto, namely, the poverty of the vocabularies of the servants' quarters, was now removed. He appointed James tutor-in-chief of the English language to himself, and saw that he entered upon his duties at once.

The first time that he accosted James in the passage outside the classroom, and desired him to explain certain difficult words in a leading article of yesterday's paper, James was pleased. Adolf, he thought, regarded the painful episode as closed. He had accepted the quarter as the full price of silence, and was now endeavoring to be friendly in order to make amends.

This right-minded conduct gratified James. He felt genially disposed toward Adolf. He read the leading article, and proceeded to give a full and kindly explanation of the hard words. He took trouble over it. He went into the derivations of the words. He touched on certain rather tricky sub-meanings of the same. Adolf went away with any doubts he might have had of James' capabilities as a teacher of English definitely scattered. He felt that he had got hold of the right man.

There was a shade less geniality in James' manner when the same thing happened on the following morning. But he did not refuse to help the untutored foreigner. The lecture was less exhaustive than that of the previous morning; but we must suppose that it satisfied Adolf, for he came again next day, his faith in his teacher undiminished.

James was polishing a set of verses. He turned on the student.

"Get out!" he howled. "And take that beastly paper away. Can't you see I'm busy? Do you think I can spend all my time teaching you to read? Get out!"

"Dere vos some hard words," said Adolf patiently, "of which I gannot the meaning——"

James briefly cursed the hard words.

"But," proceeded Adolf, "of one word, of der word 'giss,' I der meaning know. Zo!"

James looked at him. Adolf's face was wooden.

Two minutes later the English lesson was in full swing.

One may say bitter things about Fate; but it must be admitted that she frequently contrives to make amends after doing us a bad turn. It happened so in the case of James Datchett. Whether James deserved it is a matter for the private opinion of the reader.

The instrument in this case was Mr. Blatherwick.

Mr. Blatherwick was a long, grave man, one of the last to hold out against the anti-whisker crusade. He had expressionless blue eyes, and a general air of being present in body but absent in the spirit. Parents who visited the school put his vagueness down to activity of mind. "That busy brain," they thought, "is never at rest. Even while he is talking to us some abstruse mathematical problem or some obscure passage in the classics is occupying him."

About a fortnight after James' appointment to the post of English tutor to Adolf, the proprietor of Harrow House was seated in his study, brood-

ing on the hardships of life and the iniquities of parents. A certain type of parent, he thought with some bitterness, seemed to think that he kept a school from purely philanthropic motives. They appeared to be reluctant to risk offending him by mailing him a check, even though he had given them a lead, as it were, by forwarding his half-yearly bill. Young Puckey's father, for instance. All behindhand, as usual. He would pay up some time, no doubt, but to Mr. Blatherwick's mind there was no time like the present. He had had several heavy bills to meet, and a check would be extremely welcome. Why, he asked himself morosely, should he be harassed by this Puckey? It was not that Puckey had not the money. On the contrary, he was doing extremely well in the jute business. No, it was pure carelessness, and lack of consideration. Who was Puckey that he—

At this point in his meditations Violet entered with the after-dinner coffee and the last post.

Mr. Blatherwick took his letters listlessly. There were two of them; and one, he saw with a faint stir of hope, was in the handwriting of the man Puckey. He tore it open. The letter was a long one, and, as he gathered from a glance at the opening lines, one of apology. This was good, as showing that the pursuit of jute had not wholly robbed Puckey of the finer feelings. What was better was that there was a substantial check inside.

He opened the second letter. It was short, but full of the finest, noblest sentiments; to wit, that the writer, Charles J. Pickersgill, having heard the school so highly spoken of by his friend, Mr. Arthur Puckey, would be glad if Mr. Blatherwick could take in his three sons, aged seven, nine, and eleven respectively, at the earliest convenient date.

Mr. Blatherwick's first feeling was one of remorse, that even in thought he should have been harsh to the golden-hearted Puckey. His next was one of elation.

Violet, meanwhile, stood patiently in

the doorway with the coffee. Mr. Blatherwick helped himself. His eye fell on Violet.

Violet was a friendly, warm-hearted little thing. She saw that Mr. Blatherwick had had good news; and, as the bearer of the letters which had contained it, she felt almost responsible. She smiled kindly up at Mr. Blatherwick.

The major portion of Mr. Blatherwick's mind was far away in the future, dealing with visions of a school grown to colossal proportions and patronized by millionaires who paid on the nail. The section of it which still worked in the present was just large enough to enable him to understand that he felt kindly, and even almost grateful to Violet. But it was too small to make him see how wrong it was to kiss her in a vague, fatherly way across the coffee tray just as James Datchett strolled into the room.

James, who, as was his habit, had come for coffee after seeing the boys into bed, paused. Mr. Blatherwick's mind came back into the present with a rush. An embarrassing situation was saved by Violet, who, remaining absolutely unmoved, supplied James with coffee and hustled out of the room. She left behind her a somewhat massive silence.

James broke it.

"Er, is the evening paper anywhere?" he said.

"No. Ah—no. Ah, yes, it is on the table."

"I just wanted to look at the sporting page."

Sport did not appeal to Mr. Blatherwick. He made no reply.

James had been reading for a moment, when his employer coughed.

"Er—Datchett."

James looked up.

"I—er—feel that perhaps—" He paused.

"Yes?" said James.

"That—er—that—perhaps you would care to read the leader. It is very thoughtfully expressed."

James proceeded to do so. Another cough interrupted him.

"Er—Datchett."

James waited expectantly, but nothing more was forthcoming. Those were the last words that Mr. Blatherwick addressed to him that night.

It was some time after breakfast next day that Adolf trotted up for his English lesson.

"Zere are to-day some beyond-gombarison hard words which I do not understand. For eggsample——"

It was at this point that James kicked him.

"Er—Datchett," said Mr. Blather-

wick that night. "Er—Adolf came to me this afternoon with a malicious—er—story respecting yourself. I will not—er—particularize."

James nodded.

"I have, of course—er—dismissed Adolf. I cannot," proceeded Mr. Blatherwick firmly, "overlook such slanderous conduct on the part of any domestic servant in this house. I—er—it would be impossible."

After a slight pause, James said that it looked as if there might be rain tomorrow.



THE CIVILIZED

OUR parting was in peace. Another day
Shall mark our courteous greeting—even so.
Have we not learned that still the easier way
Is wiser far to go?

The times have made us what we are; we crowd
Beneath a placid brow a thought uncouth.
Only to those untutored is allowed
The privilege of truth.

The generations that went quietly
Have left their mark upon us, and, in turn,
Our passions know that tame civility
Caged animals must learn.

Before one's host should be disturbed a jot
(So runs the code) we turn with easy mien
To clasp the dank hand of Iscariot
Rather than make a scene.

And so to-day my hand touched yours the while
You knew what right it had, as well as I,
To dash from off your mouth its fawning smile
And brand and burn its lie.

'Tis well, no doubt, that careful training grips
The throat of honesty. Yet well you knew
Back of the civil greeting on my lips
The name that fitted you.

And so we part in peace to meet again
With gracious words—no doubt the wiser way—
Yet, once upon a time, the world bred men,
Not mummers in a play.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



T. MARTIN'S SUMMER, BY MARIE VAN VORST

CHAPTER I.



It is not to the point whether he had vibrated to any extent heretofore or could have recorded in his diary—had he kept one—any stronger emotion than that which thrilled him when he pulled his frogs out of the pool, or climbed to the top of “the really highest tree around,” or when responsive to his shot the robins fell a mass of feathers on the lawn. On the fifteenth of May, 18—, every pulse in his heart beat higher and his emotion was such as to leave a vivid mark down through his whole life—down through his whole life!

These feelings came back to him again many times, not in his boyhood, however—his hands were too small to hold such vastness, his heart too young; but they came back when he had learned what recollection really meant. When the last sunsets flushed his sky the memory of *her* shone over him like a star.

On that May afternoon he stood in the parlor of the James Street house. It was his own parlor, it was his own house. He had been motherless ever since his boyhood and his father only dead a year, but this house was his home, and every carpet, every crack, every spot and stain and mark he knew; the very odors were familiar, they belonged to “his house.” It was the Easter vacation, and although there wasn’t any family for him to come home to, he had been fetched back by a telegram. The house was to be sold by auction

and the natives of Syracuse were to pick up the remnants of furniture, bric-à-brac, and belongings; and when all the debts had been paid, if there should be anything left over, it would be put aside for John. He supposed “the people” would then tell him what he was to do. One of the “people” was Doctor Brainard, the family physician, another was a real-estate agent; and John Bennett wasn’t clear who the rest of them were, and it didn’t make any great difference, anyway.

The sale had been going on all day, and John stood hiding by the parlor curtains looking out at the little lawn. He gazed on the front yard, where at its foot ran the soft, muddy street and the one-horse car cut its way and jingled slushingly along. He knew the car well, he had driven it lots of times; “the man had let him,” and it was the most delightful fun in the world, better than ringing doorbells and running away, better than any kind of make-believe game, for it was a real driver, a real horse, and he felt a great responsibility turning the little loose brake. The driver used to stand and chat and laugh and read the *Syracuse Times* while John drove the lean, steady horse.

Rows of buggies, carriages, and wagons filled James Street in front of the Bennett house and a red auction flag floated out at the gate.

Doctor Brainard had told John that there were a few valuable books, a few ornaments, and his mother’s piano which he might be glad to possess, but there was no money to buy these things for the Bennett boy, and except for a desolate sense that under his feet the

very world was being cut away by a blow of the auctioneer's hammer John didn't mind. He didn't take possessions to heart, but there was just one thing he wanted. The little boy wasn't sentimental about the furniture, but he had yearned for this possession for years. It now lay on the auctioneer's table, perfectly wonderful to him; long and slender, it recalled his father as nothing else did. It was the prize shotgun awarded Mr. Bennett by the Hill Club for clay-pigeon shooting, and John thought that if he saw this gun carried out of the house under his eyes he would die.

In his knickerbockers and his little plain clothes, hands in his pockets, his brow pucker'd and his feet planted firmly on the floor, the child stood before the holocaust of his goods and chattels and waited for the auctioneer's voice to call out this article as the voice had named the other things, and it made the big tragedy of the poor boy's life.

Mr. Bennett, improvident, charming, talented, and clever, had lived something like a prince on his credit in the house in James Street. There were fine brands of champagne in the cellar, there were good cigars—already called off and appreciated. There were pistols and fencing foils, masks and shields—nothing but the gentleman's personal clothes was wanting to give a note to the sale. His silver toilet articles, his canes with fantastic handles, his little collection of old snuffboxes, all had been sold.

Near the little chap in the window Doctor Brainard had taken his place and considered the progress of the sale with his own personal feelings much alive.

He had been in love with Mrs. Bennett all his life and his sentiment was for the piano. John had not paid attention to the old man's absorbed face and he didn't dare ask him to buy the gun; he dared ask nothing, he had been told that the debts "were disgraceful, they heaped up over the house," and he felt humiliated and burdened.

From where he had hidden, he couldn't see the auctioneer's table, on

which lay the gun, but he knew he could hear when it should be called out, and he listened with his heart in his ears. He had told the fellows at school about that gun and they had envied him, and he had dreamed of carrying it, for he was a sportsman born and by inheritance. He bore whacks and bruises and hurts as boys do, but he could not bear this sacrifice, and he began to count to himself to keep quiet. He counted by tens and by hundreds—no, that wasn't right! It was a new model. Then he tried a mental example in compound fractions. If a plot of ground measuring should be sold. Sold! Why, of course, he might have jolly well known *that* word would come in. His father's own prize gun! "Gosh, dang!" he said, and was sincerely profane.

He drew his sleeve across his eyes and as he did so he saw through the tears that a new vehicle had slashed through the muddy road and stopped before the gate—a big dogcart driven by an English groom—and from it a lady climbed down and came quickly up the path. John knew the "rig" to belong to the Bathursts, and the lady to be none other than young Mrs. Bathurst. She wasn't important to him and if, with the crowd, she had passed in earlier, he would not have noticed her, but now as she sailed up the walk in her spring dress, a touch of ruffled white at the front of her bodice and the flash of flowers in her hat, she looked most lovely, and the boy noticed her. There was a brightness, a gayness about her; she differed from the dried specimens of townsfolk filling the room.

There was also about her a freedom from the horrors of money. She didn't seem to belong to auctions, and she came in like the beams of sunlight.

The young lady passed through the crowd, over to her friend, Doctor Brainard, and the doctor rose and gave her his seat. John heard her rustle by, and something that smelt like violets floated over to where he stood.

"Doctor, your wife came to me up in the valley yesterday. I wouldn't have missed this sale, you know, for anything."

The gentle voice was the first agreeable sound which had fallen on John's ears that day; it was a pleasant contrast to the auctioneer's tones. "Where's the boy?" he heard her say again.

"I don't know, I'm sure; he's around here somewhere."

Mrs. Bathurst opened her catalogue. "I'm sorry those decanters have gone and the coffee service; I adored them."

"I have put aside the books for you," the doctor replied, "and—and the piano still remains, it is an Erard. Mr. Bennett fetched it from Paris. I shall buy that myself."

"I shan't overbid you," Mrs. Bathurst assured sympathetically. "You may count on me."

And now John faced about and looked into the room. Transfigured by its disorder, filled with strangers, it was strange to him.

He remarked that the books were being called off. They were old friends and rare ones. His father had taken delight and pride in showing them to John, but he could let them go without a pang; he was an outdoor boy, a sport. Books were for stay-at-homes. Then came his mother's piano, so full of sentiment to others, but it had none for him, he had never seen her. The doctor bought it, and John Bennett had no place in the feelings the purchase aroused. He couldn't follow the fluctuations of the sale, though he thought that the doctor was bidding on the books for Mrs. Bathurst.

Now it came, however—the gun!

The auctioneer drew it out of the case; there was a silver harp on it engraved with his father's name, the name of the club, and the date of the pigeon contest. The little boy stepped from his place of hiding, his nervous hands deep in his pockets, his face scarlet above his black tie and his turnover collar. His shock of disordered hair was thick above his eyes and brow. "If I had a million dollars," he thought, "I'd give them for father's gun. They don't know," he gasped behind his set teeth, "they don't know!"

Mrs. Bathurst rose, and as she did so she saw John's face peering out be-

tween the curtains, his eyes fixed on the gun. He was only ten years old, then, but strong and muscular, straight as an arrow, tall for his age; he had a manliness about him, a fire.

The bidding began. As the bids were called fast and eager, John looked from face to face, over at the doctor and then at Mrs. Bathurst. He heard her speak, he heard her speak again and again, and then the auctioneer said: "Sold to Mrs. Peter Bathurst—" and the boy's heart nearly stopped.

Bought by a woman! By a woman! It was too much to bear.

Like a thief he slipped from the room and crept upstairs through the deserted house.

He crushed back his tears and his sudden despair. A little hall bedroom had been set apart for his occupancy and they had thrown all his things in there; but as he rushed into this refuge and slammed the door behind him, he saw that other things, too, had been hastily thrown in pell-mell—his father's clothes; topmost on John's bed were the corduroy shooting coat and breeches. He threw himself down and buried his face in the garments. They still seemed to smell of the woods. A dread of being heard kept him silent in his crying; he was no baby anyhow, but he couldn't help this outburst. "Gosh!" he repeated. "It's too mean, too mean! A woman with that bully gun!"

He heard steps on the stairs, and voices, and in another moment they had dared to open his door upon him with the indiscretion which grown-ups display toward childhood.

"Here he is!" proclaimed "the darn doctor fool," as the boy termed him. Then the doctor stood aside, and Mrs. Bathurst took his place.

"John!" She had never spoken to him before in his life. "John, may I come in a minute?"

He grumbled out he "guessed so," and she came and sat down on the bed near the corduroy clothes.

"I have been talking to the doctor about things."

She smiled, her eyes all crinkled up into little curves, and the light seemed to run over her face. She wore a spick-and-span dress, and one hand lay on the bed, very white against the brown of the corduroy hunting clothes.

"I have two boys, you know, at my house—my stepsons, little Peter and Jack. We are at the valley now, and there is lots of riding and sport there. I'd love to have you come home with me for the rest of the holidays, will you? I am going back now, the boys will be so glad to see you!"

The "people" hadn't told him where he was to stop, even for the night, and he cast a desperate glance at the uninviting bed and desolate little room where his own valise lay agape on a chair.

But absorbed as he was in his own affairs, the grace of the welcome touched the boy. She was prettier near to, she was softly bright, and her eyes were leaf-brown; she was smiling and didn't grab him and stroke his hair; she sat with one white hand on the hunting coat and one holding her handkerchief in her lap, looking up at him with those bully eyes. In the language of his rough slang he said to himself: "She's a corker, she's a corker!"

Then his resentment rose. Gosh! He'd forgotten.

Continuing to smile ravishingly, even flirting unconsciously with this very young man, drawing him with her tenderness and with that womanliness that speaks to the most youthful masculine heart, Mrs. Bathurst was making him at ten years of age her victim.

"I was so glad I came in time to-day, John. I bought your father's gun for you. I bought the set of china, too, and the silver. I want you to know it now, so you will feel you have some possessions. I bought the prize gun. I've often seen your father pass my house with it on his shoulder. It's yours, now."

The color left his face where tears had made stains over freckles and tan. He wanted to say "I'll buy it back when I'm rich," but it didn't seem exactly polite and he had no thanks at command;

indeed, he could not find anything to say; a crop of frogs seemed to jump in his throat. Rather than cry before a woman he would have been flayed alive; he stared at her desperately, rather angrily, his blue eyes on her brown ones. But through the blur he saw she was still smiling.

Virginia Bathurst was clever as well as merciful. "So if you'll just pack up those things, John, in your bag, we'll carry them to the dogcart."

He had not escaped or refused her invitation, but he had fallen madly in love.

After the twelve-mile drive and a regular "party dinner," beginning with clams and ending with ice cream, with a rough-and-tumble fight with the Bathurst boys in the hall of the big old-fashioned house, John went at bedtime to his own room, and there in the corner, in its canvas bag, stood his father's gun. The shock of the sight of it suddenly fetched up into late expression his gratitude. He went directly out into the hall, intending to go down and thank Mrs. Bathurst, but got no farther than the head of the staircase. He had not seen his friend since early that afternoon, for the boys had eaten supper alone.

She had come up the flight of stairs, and now stood on the top step in a white dress, her neck and arms bare to his young eyes. Her husband was following indulgently, smoking.

"Why, John," she said in surprise, "not in bed yet?"

He put one small, rough hand out desperately. "I was just going," he stammered, "when—when—"

A boy would rather say anything else in the world than "thank you." In their rough, simple codes, politeness is a sign of weakness.

"I wanted to say," he stammered hoarsely, "about that gun. Well, it's all right," he ended determinedly, and Mrs. Bathurst nodded back at him; she understood. She was as kind as she was beautiful.

"Why, of course, it's all right," she accepted cordially. "Good night, John."

CHAPTER II.

The "people" managed to get sufficient out of the sale to pay up the biggest of the bugbear debts, and when school opened after the holidays John's return to Exeter was taken for granted. The day before he went back, Doctor Brainard, of the piano romance, was surprised by a sudden and unannounced visit from the boy.

"See here!" John Bennett blurted out. "Who's sending me to school, anyway?"

"Why, John—" the doctor began.

"Is she?"

Doctor Brainard had another "she" in his mind, and was puzzled.

"Whom do you mean?"

"There's a ticket up in the cigar-store window; it says: 'Boy wanted.' I'd rather go and apply."

The doctor pointed to a chair vacated by the last patient.

"Sit down."

But John preferred standing, his blue and yellow jockey cap, striped by the school colors, crushed up in his hand.

"A man can't get very far these days without any education," said the doctor. "It's too soon to take you out of school, you're not eleven. We talked it over, and it seemed wisest for you to go back to Exeter. As for working in a cigar store—"

Mr. Bennett had been the "elegant" of Syracuse, the most learned, delightful man in town, spendthrift, prodigal, kind, and improvident; he had spent as he liked, played some, hunted and ridden, and when the bare corners had at last threatened to harm him too cruelly he had gone out of the world with no unkind feelings to any one in it.

"My boy," went on the doctor, "if your father were living he would send you to school at no matter what sacrifice. He was a Harvard man, and I know that he would want you to go to Cambridge."

"Well, I'm not going to let *her* send me to school!" And the doctor knew then whom he meant.

"Do you mean Mrs. Bathurst? What ever put that into your head?"

John's visit was between patients' visits, and a nervous cough from the next chamber penetrated the doors.

"Come, come," said the doctor impatiently. "Mrs. Bathurst knows nothing of it whatsoever; she's never thought of sending you to school and there's no reason why she should."

"Who is?" John asked more temperately, and with sudden shame and relief.

"Why, *I* happen to be doing so," said his friend shortly, "and you can thank me by studying well and getting along in your class. That's all right, John." He was pushing the small figure toward the door and ringing his bell at the same time.

"I'd a great deal rather work," the boy urged hopelessly.

"Come, come," his friend dismissed him. "You can't work in village stores, you know, and you're to go back tonight, aren't you? Well, we'll talk things over at dinner."

John was pushed out as the next invalid crept in with his coughs, and fits, and abnormalities, and valetudinarianisms, whilst the healthy little boy, with nothing more than the shame of poverty and a singular burden of debt for which he felt responsible, heard the consulting-room door shut upon him.

John went to Exeter that night from the doctor's house and didn't suggest storekeeping again, but began from then on to take life and education and what pleasures he could pick up as a matter of course.

CHAPTER III.

His school days went by, bland, irresponsible, with the bluff rigors of winter and its rude sports, with the warm effulgence of summer and its outdoor things. In his vacations he visited his schoolmates or more usually "he went up to Doctor Brainard's farm" and lived like a countryman in the hayfields, in the barns and lofts. He didn't injure himself studying, but learned without trouble, stood well enough in his class, and was the best boxer of his set, and a prime shot.

The years turned him out a big, clear-eyed fellow, with a thick crop of hair which his enemies called red, and a fine face full of life and light.

Before he passed his preliminaries for college a windfall blew something his way. Fate shook a tree that grows in her garden, and John Bennett standing under the trees came in for the fall.

He had been playing football one November afternoon, and was coming across the fields toward the buildings, his arms across the shoulders of his two chums. All three fellows were singing aloud. He had been sent for to see Doctor Brainard, who had run out from Boston to take a look at his ward. John scorned conveniences, and had gone into the parlor as he was, his baggy trousers green-stained at the knees, his hair as ragged and disturbed as a wheatfield in a breeze, his cheeks bright with cold and exercise.

There was nothing about him to suggest that he had been having the blues; as sincerely as a healthy boy can worry, he *had* worried. He was in debt, he owed a jolly sum for a boy, and it bothered him beyond words. He owed at the florist's a little bill of thirty dollars, and at the tailor's something like a hundred, and in his life he had never clinked together at one time the cash of more than a ten-dollar bill. The year before he had fallen in love with a girl in Boston. A pair of blue eyes, a tilt of the head, a mixture of prettiness and impertinence bowled John over and he had woodeo his sweetheart well. His very limited wardrobe—bought for the most part by Doctor Brainard at department stores—"made him sick," and he had ordered decent clothes from the best tailor in Boston and—stimulated by the color of the girl's blue eyes—he had sent her violets and other flowers, only stopping when he realized that she did not really care a pin about him.

The Christmas holidays were near at hand, and he had laid his plans for putting the case to Doctor Brainard when he should go home. There was nothing of the coward about the big, mature boy who, young as he was,

looked the man; and who, young as he was, had the temperament and ardor that might turn him so strongly for good or ill.

But there was in him nothing of the weakness that had made his father a prodigal, irresponsible spendthrift, and John had planned a noble solution of his problems to present to Doctor Brainard.

"I'll go to Cambridge, just the same," he had intended saying, to his guardian; "only I'll work there in some way or other—tutor something, or fag something, I don't know what they do—until I've paid up what I owe in Boston; that is, I mean to say, if you'll advance me the little money I shall need to enter Harvard; or if you'd rather, I'll work right there in Syracuse."

He had thought it out in a dozen ways, but this seemed the best. Never having owed a cent in his life, or realized any kind of responsibility, these first debts were shameful to him.

Violets and good clothes had not won Milly Haven, and John had come out of the experience damaged a little, for the young creature had flirted dreadfully with him; she had given him the mitten before the whole school. A college man had come along, and John Bennett wasn't in it any more. But his debts were with him. He owed a hundred and thirty dollars, and his allowance at this time was about forty cents a week.

Bennett went in as he was to the library where Doctor Brainard stood ruminating before a plaster cast.

Doctor Brainard turned and said: "You were having a game, weren't you?"

"Just coming in."

"He looks too bright for me to tell him now," John reflected, "I guess I'll wait till I get to Syracuse at Christmas."

The two sat down together in the window where without they could see the fellows coming in from different parts of the ground, over which a light fall of snow had left a fine powder.

"I've come to tell you a little piece of news, John."

A little bit of news like this, if it had been fetched to him when he was a boy at school, if Doctor Brainard had possessed the income he was about to announce to John, he might have married the woman whose lineaments he could now trace in her son. In which case there wouldn't have been any John Bennett. The doctor was getting muddled!

"Peter Bathurst has asked me to go up to the Adirondacks with him for the Christmas holidays. I think I'd rather like to go if you think—" He stopped.

"You mean, if I think you can afford it?"

"Yes, that's it," John nodded.

The doctor sat back and looked at his ward kindly.

"Your father took some shares in a mine in 18—. He was the only man in Syracuse that did so. When he failed the stock couldn't be sold for two dollars a share, and he bought it somewhere around twenty-five."

John listened; he had heard so many attacks on that dear memory—on his father's extravagance and prodigality. He loved his recollections of the gallant gentleman to whom money was a commodity and not a thing of importance, and which he could no more make or hoard than he could have made or hoarded the air. He frowned here with some expectation of an attack.

"Yesterday," the doctor went on, "I sold the stock out at two hundred. There are a few old debts which you will want to pay, although they are outlawed. This transaction makes you worth about forty thousand dollars."

John smiled.

"Gosh!" he said under his breath, and struck his pockets to feel for the bills, which, like love letters, had clung to him for months.

"I shall invest it for you in government bonds and mortgages, and in the four years before your majority I hope I shall have added to your capital."

"Then," the boy spoke with what

unconcern he could, "might I have a little money now?"

Doctor Brainard had been prepared for this demand.

"I fetched up a little for you and you can go with Peter Bathurst to the woods if you like."

"Oh, it's all right about *that*," returned the heir impatiently. "All I want is a little cash."

"How much?"

"Oh, about two hundred dollars."

His friend started. "I've brought twenty-five dollars with me," he said severely. "It's more than you have ever had at one time, and you'll have to get along with that for the present."

And Bennett, who had come into a little fortune, and who had laid all manner of noble plans about working out his college education, accepted the roll of bills which the doctor put into his hand without further protest. And when the old gentleman had taken his leave, Bennett found himself gloomily staring out into the November night, very little richer than he had been before and with his debts still hanging like Damocles' sword over his head.

CHAPTER IV.

There is no more lovely part of New York State than a certain wide valley with its sweeping fields, its gentle incline, its harvesting meadows and hunting country; and as such it is appreciated to the utmost. Its landscape is splashed with scarlet coats, its echoes roused by the horn, its furrows, ditches, and hedges shot over by horse and hound from the first of the season to its close. There are the worship and cult for the horse in Tallahoe Valley, and in this age of locomotion by steam and rail it is a pleasure to find oneself in a region where horseflesh is cultivated and where the motor may not pass, under penalty of the law.

There are fine old houses hereabouts, and fine new houses, and the atmosphere is almost English in its pastoral and sporting character and in its entertainments. Amongst other properties, the Bathurst place is Colonial, and stands

proudly on a little hill with something like six hundred acres of farm and pasture land around it.

Mrs. Peter Bathurst sat in her dressing room before the window which gave to the west. The October morning promised rain; above the trees she could see the gray skies across whose threatening face drifted a few clouds, their edges rimmed with gold. The house was full of young people, her sons' college friends, and two or three pretty girls, whom she had asked to Bathurst House for her stepsons. She wanted "to form their taste"—so she had said in writing to her Washington friend, when inviting the débutantes of the past season, Cynthia Forsyth, to come to Tallahoe for the horse show.

The guests had arrived the day before, and the hostess had barely seen them; they had been either in the saddle or driving, or tramping short-mile jaunts as is the fashion of the valley.

Mrs. Bathurst had been in Europe for ten years and had not realized how American she really was or how she loved her State until now, the brisk American air beating her cheeks, the spice and perfume of the autumn in the wind, and the vague scent of the forest fires.

As she sat before her window her husband entered in his riding clothes, his crop in his hand, his white stock rumpled, his face red as a convolvulus. Peter Bathurst, Senior, had the air of an upper groom, his boots were not over clean, and he fetched an odor of the stables with him.

"It's a bang-up show," he told his wife, taking a paper out of his pocket. "In this fourth class, for instance, where Ladybird is entered, it's a toss up who will get the ribbon, and I've never seen finer horses, even in Ireland."

"Who's to ride Ladybird, after all?" asked his wife.

"That Bennett chap."

"But he hasn't come, I thought."

"Oh, he's been here since early morning," said her husband curtly. "If

you shut yourself up here for hours, Virginia, if you fetch your Continental custom of eating in bed and dawdling about till noon in America, why, you'll miss half the shows. And if you play the offstander like this, the people here will think you're giving yourself airs."

"Offstander!" she echoed, remembering how her heart had thrilled to every inch of home. "I've been really tired out from my long ride yesterday, Peter. It's a century, you know, since I've been on a horse."

"You didn't look like a tenderfoot!" He grudgingly remembered how she had regained her seat in a trice, like the good horsewoman she was. "You'll hold your own, all right, even with these girls. I think if one of them giggles again, I'll curse. Come on downstairs, won't you? We'll want something to drink before we start."

His wife gave a lingering look at the landscape and left her lounge.

"I think I'll dress first, then I shan't need to come up again."

"What's the matter with you as you are, for Heaven's sake?"

"Will I do?"

He laughed harshly.

"Where do you think you are? At Longchamps or Ascot? Don't you remember the valley horse show?"

For answer she picked up a hat which, with its veil, lay on a table at her side, and pinned both on as she stood. She took as well a pair of long chamois gloves, drawing them between her hands.

"Come," she said quietly, "I am quite ready to go down."

And her husband went before her, muttering something about woman's eternal vanity and waste of time.

The giggle which had offended Bathurst broke silver-like from the group at the end of the big room into which, preceded by her husband, the lady of the house entered.

There was much beauty there in the little circle. Cynthia Forsyth had made a sensation in Washington the year before, and her two friends were charming seconds.

Peter and Jack Bathurst, in riding

clothes, lingered about the group, admiring the flowers of these young faces, like gardeners waiting to choose before culling the roses—already connoisseurs of the types they each preferred.

"Mrs. Bathurst!" one of the girls cried. "I'm so glad your head is better and that you are coming, and I hope Ladybird will win everything!"

Cynthia Forsyth, the daughter of her dearest friend, had been in Mrs. Bathurst's mind for her eldest stepson. The Washington débâutante turned adoring eyes on the older woman, the eyes of frank youth willing to admire until a man comes along to create jealousy. She put her arm about Mrs. Bathurst's waist.

"How sweet you look!" she murmured. "And what a darling dress!"

Mr. Bathurst grinned. "Yes, she was going to change it if I hadn't put my foot down. I believe she changes her dresses every hour. She used to in Paris, at any rate."

Miss Forsyth looked at her host with disapproval and said sharply:

"Well, I'm sure each dress has been prettier than the last."

"Where's Mr. John Bennett?" asked the hostess of her stepsons.

"Down at the show. He's crazy about Ladybird; he says she has a walk-over."

Mrs. Bathurst smiled. "I hope he's right. It's too bad Peter can't ride the mare himself."

"And why doesn't he?" asked Miss Forsyth.

"Game leg or foot," answered Jack indifferently. "And father could no more ride straight in a show than he could ride crooked out of it—nervous."

"And is your friend nervous?" Mrs. Bathurst asked, and Jack roared.

"John! He's got iron nerves, and if any one can pull the mare through, he can!"

Bathurst, who had left the room, here put his head in at the door.

"It's raining and the traps are all here. If nobody's going, I shall send the men back to the stables."

Mrs. Bathurst found herself in the buckboard with Cynthia Forsyth.

"How do you like this happy-go-lucky sporting country, Cynnie?"

"I love it!"

"So do I, every tree, and blade, and rod of it!"

"You've been away so long."

"Yes, but it's all the better to come back to now."

Cynthia Forsyth was thinking to herself: "How can she find *anything* nice either here or in Europe with that brute of a husband?"

Her mother had warned her, but the big, red-faced man with his rude remarks before company and his covert attempts to kiss her and take her hand was worse than she had feared. Cynthia, who had not turned nineteen, thought to herself: "How beautiful Mrs. Bathurst must have been!" The girl couldn't measure the power of the ripe beauty by her side in comparison with which her own frail charms were like the unmellow promise of early fruit and sure to be sharp to the taste.

"Mr. Bennett told me that he had been here once when he was a little boy," she said. "He remembers every stick and stone. You haven't seen him yet, have you?"

"Not yet; he came after I had gone upstairs."

"He's perfectly fascinating!" the girl said enthusiastically. "Such a good-looking, charming fellow. I do hope he'll get the ribbon."

"I do hope," said Mrs. Bathurst, "that he will keep Ladybird's head up at the hurdles, for she has a lot of horrid tricks which one would never suspect, and if John Bennett lets her graze the wood I pity him with my husband!"

"Stop here!" she directed her coachman. "It's as good a position as we'll be likely to find, late as we are."

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Bathurst found the scene around her agreeable, gay, and charming. There was a simplicity, an easy-going content in the valley people and in their enjoyment of their annual show. Every one was in the best of humor.

The sun had decided to shine, and the turf enclosed by its rope fencing was soft and green; the villagers poured down to it; line after line of vehicles covered the fields, and wheels and carriage covers, ponies and hacks, buckboards, drags, and rockaways crowded the meadows.

The pride of the State was there in first-rate specimens of horseflesh, and in the shape of good-looking men and women. The scene was not foreign in the least; it was purely American, with just a touch of cosmopolitanism to keep it from provincialism. Everything looked delightful to Mrs. Bathurst. She felt buoyant, and as nearly happy as possible under the circumstances.

Her husband, many of whose horses were in the show, was down by the judges' stand. But she did not linger in her observation of his figure. Her stepsons were riding and driving in the different entries, and were off with the grooms at the far end of the fields. The class of four-year-old hunters had just come on, and she consulted her catalogue to see if every one had qualified.

She was not to be permitted to view the scene alone for very long. People called to her and beckoned from the other carriages; and coming toward her as quickly as he could make his way amongst the crowd, she saw a man whom she had known all her life and whom she knew would not leave her side again so long as she remained in the field. The gentleman had left his place on his coach, and even from a distance Virginia Bathurst could see the pleasure on his face at sight of her. She sighed, changed her position, and when he came up she had lost something of her superabundant gayety.

"By Jove!" he greeted her, standing by her wheel. "I came up from Albany yesterday to the show, but I had no *idea* it would be as good as this, you know!"

"You think the average is fair?"

"Confound the horses! I think it's the most wonderful sight to see *you* again, but it's ten years, my dear friend!"

"I believe it is."

"I know. I have counted," he said meaningly, "and I've heard, too, of your goings-on in foreign parts. You had something like a jubilee."

She looked above him at the clear sky, and over the gay crowd.

"This is a jubilee," she said. "I assure you it is the nicest thing I've done or seen in ten years."

Nicholas Pyrne was in Congress—he loved his own country, and he exclaimed with real pleasure:

"Honestly, do you mean that? Aren't you expatriated yet?"

"I feel as though I had never been farther than Buffalo."

"Jolly! But you were always gracious, Virginia; I think you're laughing at us."

He leaned toward her, quite indifferent as to how marked his interest might appear. "You don't know how fine it sounds," he whispered, "to hear you speak again. It's like music! Something that has called you up here in the State?" His scrutiny was curious.

She returned his look quietly with clear eyes:

"The whole thing calls me."

"But how about Monte Carlo, and Paris, and Hombourg?"

She shook her head.

"Tallahoe and the annual horse show—nothing else."

"Bully!" he breathed in ecstasy. "Bully! You look, Virginia—"

But here she put her hand up preventingly.

"You'll spoil everything if you make it personal. Tell me," she pursued, leaning forward and searching the crowd, "where is the man who is to ride Peter's Ladybird?"

"I don't know," said the Honorable Nicholas. "I thought Peter was to ride his own horse."

"He has both gout and nerves," said his wife. "One of the boys' friends, John Bennett, is to take Ladybird around."

"Bennett," Pyrne asked, "the son of poor Fred Bennett of Syracuse?"

"Yes."

"Well, if he has his father's ill luck, poor chap, he'll come a cropper all right. It was enough for Fred to look at a scheme to have it go to bits the next day, I remember."

"When I saw him last," Mrs. Bathurst said, "he was in knickerbockers—he had red hair. He spent a Sunday over here in the valley."

"There's Peter! That's his horse!" Pyrnne indicated. "If the other horses in this class are as good as Bathurst's mare, it's a pretty good show all around.

"There!" he went on. "That must be your friend standing by Bathurst. Knickerbockers and red hair, he hasn't changed."

Mrs. Bathurst followed his indications, and saw the giant in his breeches and riding boots.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "If they have all grown like that, Nick, what have I changed to? Why, it's a man, a magnificent man!"

She put her lorgnon up, though she didn't need it.

"Ten years work all kinds of tricks," Nicholas Pyrnne said comfortingly. "I've grown fat and turned forty."

"Oh, hush!" she said. "Hush!"

"And you," he continued, lowering his voice, "have grown more—"

But here Mrs. Bathurst called to the girl who had come toward her carriage:

"Cynthia, get in here, will you? This is Mr. Nicholas Pyrnne, Miss Forsyth of Washington. I think you knew her mother, Cynthia Fielding. I want you all to rally around me while Ladybird runs for the Valley Cup."

CHAPTER VI.

Bennett knew that he had more or less of a thankless task to perform in riding Ladybird for her choleric owner. If she won anything at all it would be thanks to the horse, and if she didn't get a mention it would as naturally be his fault. Bathurst had been charming to the young man when he arrived that morning, late by twenty-four hours, on account of a railway wreck at Buffalo; and nothing of the host's sharp manner

to his sons, rudeness to the servants, was reflected in his attitude toward the young college man, although these things bore out Bathurst's reputation for being a vulgar tartar.

Mrs. Bathurst he had not seen at all. The woman who had claimed his boy eyes, who had given him such pretty proof of heart and understanding, had become a dream to John; she was a memory he shrank from because it meant that he must recall with poignant ache the auction day and the accompanying horrors, which even the fact of his brief holiday at Bathurst House, his father's rifle, and her kindness could not make him forget.

He had had his own affairs and they had followed one upon another with amazing rapidity; since little Milly there had been other blue eyes, other beauties, and John discovered himself to be a fickle lover, restless in his courtships and too volatile and easily charmed to a new beauty. But during the past two years he had been fancy free, calling himself already a cynic, aping the older men, developing a difficult taste and thinking himself a misogynist. Of course, it only made him "perfectly fascinating," as Cynthia Forsyth had said, and John was in danger of being well spoiled.

Here, at Bathurst House, the beautiful mare Ladybird interested him more than Cynthia Forsyth with her laugh which Bathurst called a silly giggle, and John had not even looked toward the other girls in the party.

Back of the line of fine old elms that bordered the village street in Tallahoe, the Big Tree Inn nestled white with its green blinds, small window panes, and hospitable doors. John had put up there, for the Bathursts' house was full, and he had been rather glad of the fact because he had greater independence; and really, as he said to himself, he didn't want to bother with the girls.

As John stood down by Ladybird on the show grounds with Mr. Bathurst, Peter, and Jack—Peter with his blue ribbon won for roadsters on his lapel—

John Bennett felt that riding Ladybird he was going to do a stroke for the whole family. Neither of the sons of the house had been allowed to ride Bathurst's favorite mare, and the sole and only reason that John came in for this distinction was because the year before Mr. Bathurst had seen him ride at Syracuse in the State Fair. John had made a peerless record with his own colt, and had won himself some distinction as a rider and owner.

He felt a great responsibility and pride about the whole thing; he had never had a family that he could remember himself; now Peter and Jack and "the old man," as they irreverently called their father, and some indistinct idea of a lady made a little household for him, and he was representing it. He got into his saddle, felt the fine supple body of the mare between his knees, led her gently off the tender grass, and the pride of his next few minutes and what he thought would be his sure success sent his young blood sparkling through his veins like wine.

"That's our trap over there," Peter Bathurst told him, "there by the yellow coach." And John glanced to see that it had the effect of being full of flowers, but he only recognized Cynthia Forsyth and not the taller figure by her side.

When he took Ladybird around the course she came her five hurdles like the bird she was, lightly, and following a gelding she seemed especially feather-weight and made out of the air. It was a gone conclusion, John felt it. So did the others who watched him, the spectators, and the judges, and Peter Bathurst as, legs well apart, hands in his whicords pockets, an unlit cigar between his teeth, he stood smiling with nervous assurance and thinking how much he would like that big blond jockey for his son.

John, "riding for his family," as a whim made him call them, passed Ladybird's owner like thistledown, passed the judges as well, absorbed in their anxiety to be perfectly unprejudiced before the sight of such splendid style and strain, and such an exhibition of

horseflesh, and such an exhibition of riding, John, "riding for the family," as he passed them all, swallowed the golden draught of success with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, and the last time round he glanced in the direction the Bathurst boys had indicated and saw Mrs. Peter Bathurst standing up in the trap—he saw her in that brief second between the hurdles; she was looking at him. He remembered then how she used to look. The memory was strong. Never having admitted the thought of her, in his naïve innocence, how was he to know as he should draw the latch the great emotion would rush on him and beat him down? With that one quick sight of the lady, caught between hurdles, with the wave of her hand at him and her "bravo!" he knew that he was riding for her, for the lady herself.

The blood rushed from his heart to his cheeks, his breast gave a big throb, he reached the hurdle unprepared for it, because sportsman that he was, he had never gone into any field with a tormenting thought of a woman in his mind, and the sudden commotion communicated itself to the sensitive Ladybird. Bennett thought she was going to refuse the hurdle and he sickened. But no, she rose for it, then retrieved, if one may so say, seemed to strike it with all fours, foundered, got tangled up, lost her perfect method, lost herself, and fell, and John fell with her; and the hurdle, and the horse, and the earth all struck him and poured themselves over him. But even before he lost his senses, shame poured over him blackest and deadliest of all.

When John finally opened his eyes, he was lying under a tree, and the first thing he saw was the west red with a brilliant sunset. The dizzy faintness that was leaving him for a bit was more deathlike than sharp pain would have been. His forehead was cold, for there was a wet linen on it, and one of his hands felt full of sawdust. He squeezed it and the sensation told him that he pressed a human hand, soft as the breast of a bird.

He turned his eyes to the direction

and saw something which, after a great many years, brought back to him the memory of things he loved, of things that used to make him cry when he was a youngster, and make him awfully happy as well. He was far too injured and bruised and broken to know what it was that he saw, to know that it was only the face of a woman bending above him, and that after many years he was looking at Virginia Bathurst again.

CHAPTER VII.

The first thought he was conscious of forming as he lay in the little room in the Big Tree Inn, where he had been carried, was the thought of his father. There are certain natures which avoid by instinct those memories which bring pain; no matter how salutary and dear those memories are, if they are likely to fetch tears they are put gently and firmly away from the mind.

He was out of danger. He was bandaged to his eyes where Ladybird's hoofs had cut a circular swath, he was bandaged about the legs and ribs. He had been conscious off and on without forming any consecutive thought until now.

There was no one in the room.

"Father was always unlucky," he reflected, "he seemed to have the worst kind of luck all through. I wonder if I'm going on in the same way, for this thing here has been the deuce of a muddle. Damn that horse!" Although he was weak, the blood rushed into his cheek. "Damn my own foolishness!"

He thought of the points of the little mare. What a bird she was! How well she had promised, and how well she would have performed if it had not been for him!

"She must be crippled, if she's alive," he thought. What would the Bathurst fellows think; what would Mr. Bathurst say? He winced. So far as the value of the horse were concerned, if he should attempt to make good, it would cost him considerably over his year's income.

He couldn't remember whether any one had been in to see him as he lay

there; and as he continued to set his thoughts in order, his blue eyes peering between the white bandages, the reason came of a sudden to him why he had missed his hurdle, and he felt a sudden insane resentment against the reason.

He looked like a thunder cloud. And just then Peter Bathurst, Junior, came in for his first visit.

"By George, Johnny!" he cried cordially. "You're sensible!"

"Sensible enough to be mad as a hornet," answered the young man. "And I guess the lot of you are mad at me, as well."

"Rot!" cried his chum comprehensively. "What do you take us for? And how do you feel, anyway?"

"Bully!" nodded Bennett feebly. "That is, I don't feel crazy, and I suppose that's an advance, isn't it?"

"You'll be all right in a day or two. The doctor says he never saw ribs and bones knit up like yours."

"Were they *all* bust?" the invalid asked, and Peter laughed.

"There wasn't one whole rib left in you—they couldn't have found one to make another Eve."

And here the other swore lightly. "If there had been—I can tell you I wouldn't have let them make a *woman* out of it."

"Come," his friend soothed feelingly, "you'll have to let up a bit, Johnny, on your woman hating. Cynthia Forsyth's been staying on and on at the house for no earthly reason but to see you when you are visible."

John grunted, and Peter, who was hanging over the bed, repeated:

"Do you really feel pretty good, old chap?" Then seeing that there was a look of fatigue in his friend's eyes, he said: "I'll have to be getting on, now; they told me only to stay five minutes. Nobody's allowed in here, you know—guarded like a diamond mine."

John had not dared to ask about the miserable event on the field, and when his chum had gone he closed his eyes and dozed and dreamed of dashing over hurdles in a chariot made out of the night and with stars above his head,

which, as he looked closer, changed into the eyes of a woman. And dozing and dreaming and waking, finding himself stiff and lame and full of pains, he at length came again definitely into consciousness and saw in the chair at the window a lady sitting, and as she turned she nodded, smiling.

"You're a great deal better, Mr. Bennett, and we're all *so* glad!"

It was not a nurse. She had no hat on, her hair was dark and velvet-like, a white apron came up stiffly and yet softly over her bosom, and a lot of white stuff lay in her lap—she had been sewing. She folded the work and put it away, and Bennett watched her. When she rose, he saw how tall she was, how slim she was.

Still smiling, she came to the bed, and he remembered now that this was not the first time he had watched those crinkling lines around her eyes and mouth. The little hall bedroom—recovered to his remembrance—was piled full of his father's clothes, and in the seclusion he had cried at the disposal of his household goods; the shame of the auction, which he had hated to think about, gave him a twinge.

The lady sat down at his bedside. She laid one of her hands on the coverlid, and John remembered that it had rested on his father's corduroy hunting coat like a snowflake on a bit of brown earth.

But Mrs. Bathurst—did he remember her? Had he indeed ever seen her before? If he had never seen her before how could he have forgotten her? There was a little droop at the curve of her mouth corners; her cheeks were softly red. Her eyes were like velvet with pretty little lines at the corners. Her dark, strong hair grew closely around her brow and in a pointed peak, cutting into the white forehead.

She repeated: "You're a great deal better, and the doctor says we can move you this week. The other nurse has gone out for a while—I'm only one of them. And how do you feel, anyway?"

"Have you been taking care of me?"
"Now and then."

"Well, you're most awfully kind."

He didn't know what to say. He was embarrassed—embarrassed that she should see him lying his length in bed.

"You mustn't talk," she said authoritatively. "I was sorry not to welcome you the day you came to Bathurst House. I wonder if you remember that I saw you when you were a little boy?"

He did not answer.

"How long have I been knocked up here?"

"A fortnight," she said.

"Mr. Bathurst must hate me."

She smiled soothingly. "Oh, don't bother about such a thing. He's not in Tallahoe; he's in New York."

A relief came with her words. Although he didn't believe her, he was glad to know that his host didn't breathe the same air with the miserable, unsuccessful jockey.

"I feel as if I oughtn't to be so spoiled," he said a little roughly, "after the ass I made of myself."

"Don't talk," his nurse commanded again, "don't talk, or I shall have to pull down the shade and give you something to make you sleep."

He stirred in his bandages and tried to move in his jacket of plaster. With the life that was coming back to him, the keenest thing was the sense of his disgrace before them all.

"Please, Mrs. Bathurst, let me ask a little. These things trouble me when I get to sleep, they come like nightmares. What does Mr. Bathurst say?"

The smile on the face before him faded.

"Oh, why *do* you bother?" she said rather impatiently. "A fall like that might have happened to any man, and there is always some sort of an accident at the show. The only thing worth thinking about is that you are safe, that you are not killed; that is the only question to be considered. And one can't be too grateful for that, can one? And then, too, as long as it happened afterward."

"Afterward!" he repeated vaguely.
"After what?"

"Why, I mean to say, after the show—after your entry—after the judging. Of course you know you got the ribbon. When you're better," she went on, "you'll tell me, for I shall want to ask you why you kept on taking the hurdles."

He closed his eyes, he was getting muddled. Of course, he had gone back into that infernal nonsense land, that was it! It was like Alice in Wonderland, things were pursuing him, and certainly this was a cruel vision.

He lifted his heavy lids again.

"Do you mind," he begged, "just explaining *what* you mean. I guess I'm dotty still. I wonder if I can understand what you mean about the ribbon."

"Why, you remember"—she leaned over him speaking softly—"that you rode Ladybird at the show?"

"Gosh! Yes, I remember *that!*"

"And you remember that you showed her off superbly—that she easily took the ribbon from the whole class? Why then just as you were supposedly riding off, instead of doing so, you went for two more hurdles, although my husband and the jury called out to you, and at the last the poor beast refused—and that's where the tragedy occurred!"

"I had won the ribbon?" he echoed, hearing nothing else.

"Why, yes! Yes! Everything would have been all right if you had only stopped. Didn't you know it? Why did you go on? We all have wondered."

The young fellow stared rather pitifully at her. His face—what she could see of it—pale with unusual pain, had matured, and his boyishness for the moment was gone. He looked like an old soldier after a campaign, and from behind the snowy bandages his eyes shone like deep blue stars.

"Do you remember now, Mr. Bennett?" To herself she thought: "I'm going to make him understand it, it's just as well that he should." And she repeated gently: "Do you remember—can you tell me why you kept on at the hurdles?"

A delicate color stole into his cheek. He said weakly: "I seem to remember

now that we passed the goal all right and in good shape. Then I couldn't stop, I went straight on with the poor little mare. Is she dead? Don't mind, I can stand it. Is Ladybird dead?"

She nodded slowly.

"I'm very sorry," he said simply, "she was a corker! Mr. Bathurst will hate me all right. I should think he would! She must have been worth a pile of money. She was the best little beast I ever rode."

His eyelids fell, he could have cried like a girl, there seemed to him something so unnecessary, so wanton, so mean in what he had done.

And whilst the lady was quite unprepared for his look, he opened his eyes upon her as she stood there, the apron folds across her breast, her hands still lying on the coverlid. He regarded her with a gravity that amazed her, and he was thinking silently: "I wonder what she'd say if I told her the reason that I went on riding like that was that I looked up suddenly over where the fellows said the trap was—and I saw her."

CHAPTER VIII.

From the roof, over which the branches of the oaks after turning to brittle brown were beginning to fall, to the piazza at whose steps the horses rode up to be mounted, and from where one looked off to the curves and folds—the cups and dips of the valley—Bathurst House, the whole of it, was a dwelling of enchantment to John Bennett.

He had been a guest there now for three weeks. After his removal from the Big Tree Inn they fetched him here, fixed him up in a fine big room with a fine big view, and with every goodness and kindness around him, and the morning and the evening of it were the first day. The whole of Bathurst House had one significance and was full of magic to the corners and roof line.

Bathurst House was the shell that held its mistress. At any time John might see her pass through the rooms in some one of her frocks, whose grace and goodly sweep and perfume became for the young man like cerements with

which, as it were, he found himself all wrapt round, and in which he hid his face and pressed to his lips in his dreams at night.

He might, in handing her an object, no more important than a teacup or a book, or her entirely marvelous hand-kerchief, come nearer to the perfume—be more shocked by it. He might, in giving her a trifling thing, touch her, and for this the football half-back, the sport, the young man who loved riding and hunting and outdoor, lived hour by hour, with all his young senses stirring like birds come to maturity and longing for the one supernal flight.

And this was the way in which the young man fell first in love. This was the way the sportsman and athlete saw his heart open to a woman years his senior and beautiful enough to have charmed him down to the last of his dim old days. Like this the first woman came to John Bennett, and it was nothing but the old story over again, interesting because it was first love—because it was real. His heart was entirely virgin and entirely clean, and Virginia Bathurst wrote her name there.

He had been still another three weeks in his room, caged up—visited by his chums, visited by Miss Cynthia Forsyth, finally, just before he came downstairs. One day Mrs. Bathurst and she came in to sit with him for tea. And John had quietly looked out at the yellow shadow of the tree before his window while Miss Forsyth read aloud and Mrs. Bathurst embroidered.

It was his last day upstairs. The next he was down, still an invalid, but intact. It was another man from the one they had carried up from the Big Tree Inn. He had gone into his room with broken ribs and broken bones, he came down a little shaky but solid—victim of a more serious complication; the pity of it was that for the malady with which he suffered now there was no cure.

"Virginia, I didn't know you were a matchmaker!"

Nicholas and her husband sat by Mrs.

Bathurst's side. Mr. Bathurst in evening dress, his red face above his white collar shining like an inebriate moon in the full, answered sarcastically:

"Virginia's so happy in her married life, Pyrnee, that she wants to fetch everybody into the ring-a-round-a-rosy."

Peter never addressed his wife without a covert insult or a sneer or some broad admiration which she felt harder to bear than any other form of torture. After flinging in her face his infidelities for years, he had discovered that his wife was the handsomest and most attractive woman he knew; he had returned to her and found her cold, indifferent, and with nothing for him but indomitable dislike.

"You say you forgive me, Virginia," he often flung at her. "I wonder if any woman can forgive a man from an iceberg and freeze him with it as you can."

He hung about his wife like a sullen animal, half worrying her, and half in hopes of winning some caress. She told herself that she had done all she could, she thought she had done what she could—she tolerated him in her house, in her presence, and as well as she could covered her dislike and disgust. Divorce never occurred to her, and in Paris during the years when his open scandals would have excited her to the point of separation she had lived her own life freely and without hesitation, accepting admiration and the flattery her beauty commanded. But no one had ever touched her sentiments even vaguely; she had believed herself immune. Years before she had loved her husband, and he had insulted her.

Nicholas Pyrnee had cared for her long before her marriage, and her refusal of him had spoiled his life. "After you threw me down, Virginia," he used to tell her, "I never got up again." He accepted his career in a half-hearted way, only counting the times when he saw her and only, because she forbade him, keeping himself from following her wherever she went.

"I like to see your interest in mar-

riage," Pyrne said to her now. "I like to see a woman helping the good cause along. But you don't find Miss Forsyth as pliable as Miss Cornwallis, do you?"

"Cynthia's a silly little fool," said Bathurst politely, "and Jack's far too good for her. I'll tell him so to-night after dinner."

"I don't think you need to do so," said Pyrne, "and he'll put you in your place if you do. Did you ever let your father give you advice about your girls? I guess not."

"I wish to Heaven he had," muttered Bathurst.

"Jack doesn't care a red cent for Miss Forsyth," Pyrne went on smoothly, and Mrs. Bathurst interrupted:

"Oh, don't you think so?"

"Not a red," said Nicholas decidedly. "Any man in love can see that."

He made no secret of his own tenderness, and Peter Bathurst, oddly enough, had no jealousy regarding his wife's old friend. He took a sort of delight in his companionship, and they had been friends for years.

"I don't care whether Jack likes her or not," said Bathurst rudely. "She'll give him the go-by if he asks her to marry him. She's head over heels in love with John Bennett, and she doesn't care who knows it, either."

Mrs. Bathurst had long since learned to hold her tongue. It was part of her cruel strength that her husband never tortured her to reply or to reproach. Pyrne said:

"If what you tell me is true, old man, I'm going to watch the game."

"These young girls are as *rusées* as a woman of thirty, my dear man," said Bathurst.

Mrs. Bathurst rose and left them here. There was a group out in the hall around the piano; at it Donald Dashwood, one of the beaux of the country, an inveterate hunter, and a gay, good liver, was sitting playing and singing a hunting song.

As Mrs. Bathurst went out, Peter said:

"They're a silly, giggling lot, and as green as grass, all of them."

"Well," said Pyrne good-humoredly, "I must say I think Miss Forsyth's rather more like a bouquet. She's the prettiest young woman of the season."

"She hasn't the sense to make up to my son," grunted Peter, Senior, "she prefers that red-headed football player, who would do better with a football between his legs than a horse. It makes me sick whenever I think of that mare, Pyrne."

The two men passed out toward the hallway.

"I've been decent to him"—Bathurst lowered his voice—"because he's in my house, but I loved Ladybird, and there are times when I could tell him my mind."

Nicholas nodded absently.

"Do you want to lose a little money, Nick?" his host continued, holding back Pyrne by the arm.

"Well, I'd just as soon make fifty dollars off you," said Pyrne, "if that's what you want me to say."

"I bet you fifty dollars," said Bathurst, "that I kiss that girl before tomorrow morning, and that she lets me."

Pyrne laughed. "You're a bit stronger than she is. I don't think anything but main force would do it."

"I know the breed," said the other slowly. "These young twentieth-century girls are all alike. You can kiss any one of them fast enough."

"Don't be a brute, Bathurst!" said Nicholas tartly.

"Will you bet?"

"No," said Nicholas slowly, "I will not, and you'd better not let that red-headed football player see you try."

Bathurst laughed delightedly. "That's all right," he said, "that dare of yours is as good as a bet. I don't know but I like it better. You spur me on, old man."

"All right," said Nicholas impatiently, trying to get away from him, and when he was alone he said: "Common beast! Poor Virginia! I couldn't have turned out worse than that. She'd better have taken me twenty years ago."

Miss Forsyth baffled any matchmaking; she was a cool little flirt, and if she

had much heart behind her graceful exterior, she didn't tell for whom it beat.

Mrs. Bathurst of late had been absorbed in other things than Cynthia's love affairs. She had been nursing John Bennett back to life. Of the other young members of the house party, Miss Cornwallis, without any one's aid or any persons to interest themselves in her marriage, had carried Peter Bathurst by storm. The two were engaged, and Cynthia was stopping on with her friend and no longer clung to Mrs. Bathurst; she kept to herself, and as soon as John Bennett came downstairs she had stopped flirting with Jack; she was ready to be made love to, and the right man didn't take the hint. She sat on this night at dinner next to her host, of whom she was a little afraid. When she had time to think of Virginia Bathurst at all, she pitied her.

Virginia wore a dark dress, a little band of diamonds in her hair, a little line of them around her throat, a cluster at her breast; and her arms and hands lay along the dead white dinner cloth like carved ivory, but of a warmer texture, and under the fine flesh the life ran warm.

John Bennett and Mr. Pyrnne sat either side of her. Pyrnne talked to her without interruption, she answering him witily with the familiarity of old acquaintance, and the young collegian watched and listened, not venturing to take too active a part. All down the table centre spread the flowers in their fresh and fragrant beauty; the scent of lilies and violets, the odor of mignonette and heliotrope hung light upon the air. Several of the men were in pink coats.

"How many of you are going to the meet to-morrow?" Pyrnne suddenly asked.

John Bennett, lifting up his head, said: "I am, for one," and stopped like a sensitive horse, for fear of the blow his host might deal him. But Bathurst was otherwise engaged and did not hear Pyrnne's question:

"Are you *really* going? Do you feel up to it yet?"

"Dashwood has loaned me his horse,"

said Bennett, "and I hope I won't break his legs."

"I don't think you will," said Mrs. Bathurst quietly, "for I don't believe you'll ride to hunt. Are you quite crazy, John?"

A sudden exultation that she had forbidden him, that she had cared to forbid him, was followed by the feeling that she spoke to him as though he were a boy, a child; and a sort of contradiction that often rises in the early stages of love and a desire that her pleading should be further pushed, made John say:

"But I've got to make a move some time. I guess I'm all right, and Dashwood's got his horse over from the farm for me."

Mrs. Bathurst, still regarding him, as he thought, in a maternal fashion, looking at him as she might at Jack or Peter, said:

"Oh, you mustn't even think of it; you're certainly not up to it."

John felt Pyrnne's eyes on him as well—in a fatherly fashion, he thought—and he raged. He hated Nicholas Pyrnne with his cool assurance, his infernal cheek as the young man called it; with his air of possession, his beastly way of being familiar—the fact that he was an old, old friend.

"Are you riding?" he asked shortly.

"I should say I was!" returned the congressman. "I didn't come up here in the valley to miss a hunt."

"Are *you*?" His blue eyes, which avoided Mrs. Bathurst as a rule, met the sparkle of those dark ones now, met the look of amusement and kindness.

"Why, of course," she said. "I have been longing for the hunt. I think every one is riding but you."

A stupid, silly fury sprang up in him, and if a fiery horse with death in his nostrils had appeared he would have thrown himself on the beast gladly and ridden to perdition just to prove his obstinacy. He would show how strong he was.

"Dashwood," he cried, across the table, "it's all right, isn't it, about that horse of yours?"

"Certainly, he's waiting for you to

break his legs, my dear chap. He'll be cooling down his heels at the proper time to-morrow. Just telephone to-night to the stables and speak to the head groom."

"All right," said Bennett easily. "Thanks, a thousand times, old man."

The lady glanced at him, surprised, then answered Nicholas Pyrnné's remark, whatever it may have been, and turned her face from her obstreperous invalid. She paled slightly, and Bennett had the satisfaction of knowing that he had been rude and a boor, ungrateful, impossible, and that he had displeased her. His folly made his heart sore, but as he pushed his chair a little back from the table he felt more like a man.

Bathurst had got up and gone out of the room, to the telephone, and had not heard the conversation, so he had no chance to throw a barbed dart at poor Bennett regarding his ride.

"I say, Cynthia!" he called back into the room. "Come here a second, will you? Somebody's got you on the telephone. Washington wants you."

Miss Forsyth was so little *rusée* and so perfectly sweet and of good faith that she ran out of the dining room in answer to her Washington call and into the telephone booth whose door Peter Bathurst, Senior, held open for her, but with one thought in her mind: "Oh, dear, I hope they are not sending for me to go home!" And when a few minutes later she returned to the dining room, she was very much disturbed, breathing rather fast, and it would have been plain for any one to see who looked twice at her that she had had some kind of a shock.

Two of the guests looked twice at her: Pyrnné and Jack Bathurst. No one else.

"Bad news?" Jack asked. "What's up?"

"No," Cynthia stammered, "nothing very bad."

And Grace Cornwallis, who lived in one long dream of bliss, came out of her Arcadia long enough to remark to her friend:

"Why, Cynthia, is your mother ill?"

And here Miss Forsyth recovered her composure and laughed, pulling her wits together.

"Why, nobody's ill. It's nothing but a stupid telephone mistake. It was Buffalo wanting to talk to the Washingtons over the hill."

But Cynthia joined Miss Cornwallis and Peter, and the girls went out together arm in arm from the dining room. Pyrnné looked for Bathurst, who did not appear, and then looked at the girl in an amused and rather conscience-stricken fashion. Cynthia in a big chair in the corner of the room saw John Bennett cross over to her. The occurrence was rare and she waited with delight, the discomfort of the telephone experience for the moment overshadowed.

John was very tall, he carried his inches well, his shoulders were like a young Titan's; his bones had knit well, his flesh had returned to him, his simple life and habits, his good spirits, and good temper had pulled him back rapidly.

Cynthia didn't know that he was annoyed and miserable, and calling himself a rude ass. He came and sat down by her side.

"I can't tell Grace," she thought. "She's too much in love with Peter, and it would make her fearfully angry. I can't tell Mrs. Bathurst least of all. I can't tell Pyrnné, he'd laugh at me most likely, and then he's Mr. Bathurst's friend. I can't go home yet. I don't want to go home. I don't want to go!"

"How about getting up at five a. m. to-morrow, Miss Forsyth?" Bennett asked her.

"Oh, I'm quite up to it," she replied. "But really and truly, Mr. Bennett, you oughtn't to ride yet, you know."

"Oh, bosh!" said John. "Don't you join in and make me out a mollycoddle. I thought you were a sport."

"I'm not," she said definitely, "I'm not a bit of a sport. I begin to think I must be a coward and a silly little fool."

John bent his blue eyes on her in surprise. The type of the girl he had

made love to all his youth was before him in Cynthia Forsyth. If Milly Haven had gone on being and existing in his environment, she would have been like this, slender, charming, fine.

Cynthia's eyes were softer than Milly Haven's, and kinder. She looked like a bouquet of jasmine, all in white and very sweet, and there was something in her which seemed to question the young man as she looked up at him from the depths of her chair. He hadn't observed her much before. He knew that she was rich, pretty, and that Jack would please his family if he married her. He knew that Jack teased him, and said that Cynthia was "mad about John Bennett." Girls had been crazy about him ever since he had shone out at a party in Boston, his red head above his first stiff shirt and his first black coat, and he had licked a fellow that night, at his first ball. Because Cynthia Forsyth's eyes were something like Milly Haven's, John recalled that escapade.

"Do you know," he said abruptly, with a little laugh, "I have just thought of something rather funny?" He had been too long out of the sentimental game, he said to himself. Too long out of the way of making pretty speeches; he thought he would take a turn now, and he leaned over Cynthia.

"Do you know that I lambed a fellow half to bits for a girl who had eyes like yours?"

But he had spoken far better and more to the point than he could have imagined now.

"Did you really?" Miss Forsyth exclaimed. She sat up from her languid position. "Did you?"

John nodded and laughed. He was thinking of the fight and how the boy had met his blows.

"I don't know why I should remember it especially," he said, "one fight's about like another. Only, you see, your eyes made me think of it, I suppose."

"What did the boy do?" Miss Forsyth asked.

"He didn't do it," John said. He put his hands in his pockets and leaned back in his chair. "That was the point."

"What did he try to do?"

"He tried to kiss the girl who gave the party, of course," said John, "behind the door, and she got out and I got in. That's all. Very easy to do. It wasn't what you'd call party manners, by a good deal, and the girl's mother sent us both home in a cab!"

"I hope," said Miss Forsyth, with animosity, "that you pounded him well."

"I licked him the best I could," said John, with satisfaction, "and he was my chum as well, which went against the grain."

"I wish," said Cynthia abruptly, "that you'd do a little licking for me."

John raised his eyebrows.

"Really?" he said. "Whom?"

The words once out of Miss Forsyth's mouth, she regretted them. She grew cold, she had gone on as girls do when in the atmosphere of the man they like. She looked pinched and rather frightened, and as John looked at her the bright attraction she had for the moment possessed, faded.

"Not Jack?" he asked. "Not another chum, eh?" He looked around the room.

Peter and his fiancée were already in some friendly, deserted room across the hall. Mrs. Bathurst was playing solitaire on a little table before the fire. Her profile was toward them. One by one she laid the cards before her in their sequence. Nicholas Pyrne, Dashwood, and the host smoked before the fire. John's eyes caught the flash of her hand at she shuffled her cards.

"Whom shall I lick?" he repeated absent-mindedly.

"Not Jack," the girl whispered, "and not Peter, of course, and not Mr. Pyrne—"

"By George!" John said sympathetically, coming back to her. "What, he? That old soak, the old bully!" He stared at her. "Do you mean to say that—"

Cynthia in that moment, as his warm young voice took her part, went over, heart and soul, to John Bennett. What a big, splendid champion he would be—what a man he seemed! Carried away by his sympathy she murmured:

"Oh, ever since I came he's been too horrid. I knew he was that kind. Mother warned me, and I have kept away. I haven't told Grace or any one, but to-night, when he called me out to the telephone, of course there wasn't any message."

"I see," said John encouragingly. "I see, the old brute! He tried to kiss you?"

"Yes," she answered, "and I slapped his face so that my hand stung."

"Good!" said John. "I'm glad of that."

Oh, yes, he knew what a brute Bathurst was. But the host, for some reason or other best explained by his peculiar temperament, had not vented his spleen on John, even though the boy had spoiled his horse.

But John knew he was a beast, and sitting beside the girl who had confided in him, his sympathy went not to her, but to the other woman before the cards. One by one Mrs. Bathurst laid the little bits of pasteboard down. Her rings sparkled. The gems on her dress sparkled, the lines of diamonds in her hair sparkled as well. She was a brilliant figure in the firelight that drew its red kerchief along her bare arm. The blood which at any long looking upon her stung John's veins, rose now.

"I'd like to break his neck," he said brutally, and he clinched his hands.

But Miss Forsyth had experienced the relief which her confidence brought, and she was less exaggerated in her demands for war.

"Yes, isn't it too disgusting?" she said. "Too disgusting? But, of course, one can't do much about it."

"You see," said Bennett, "after all, we are his guests. I am particularly. I've been looked after like one of the family. I'm heavily in his debt."

"Oh, I don't want you to whip him behind his own door, Mr. Bennett. I only wanted to tell some one, and I told you."

"I'm glad you did," he said simply. "Bathurst must have been drunk, of course. But he's a beastly cad. If he bothers you any more let me know."

John couldn't tell why he offered this

sudden championship, which he would certainly find it difficult to live up to in a man's own house.

Miss Forsyth said rather foolishly: "Oh, of course, if it gets too bad, I can go."

"Yes," said John, with too cruel indifference. "Of course." For just then Mrs. Bathurst finished her patience and looked up triumphantly.

"I made it, Nick!" she called. "Twice running."

"First rate! Shall we gamble on it? Five dollars for the first two made."

"If you like! Only I forget where I put the other patience cards. Oh, I remember, the drawer in my dressing table."

Bennett sprang up, and without a word to the girl whose side he left: "Let me get them!" he offered and went out, two steps at a time up the stairs, on her errand at the first sound of her voice.

Once or twice with Jack or Peter, Junior, John had passed the threshold of the room toward which he made his way. He had seen the interior the day before when with her husband he had gone into the boudoir for a cup of tea. But he wanted to go to that room alone, and he went toward it now with an eagerness that was almost a thirst. The door was open, but there was no light. On the *chaise longue* her dressing gown was thrown, her slippers were beside it on the floor. There was a book with a paper cutter between the leaves, and on the left was the piece of furniture in whose drawer the cards had been placed.

Bennett stood a second just over the doorsill and drew a long breath. The same fragrance he connected with her hung on the air of the room.

Through the open door he looked into the bedroom. It was very white and great and vast. The aspect of the place, the home it was for her, the fact that it sheltered her for many hours and for the most intimate hours —the place it was, overcame the boy as if it had been filled with a sudden light that smote his eyes. Something like a cry came from his lips and the

perspiration rose on his brow. He brushed his hand across his forehead and eyes. Shivering with emotion, then shaking like a man who has seen a ghost, he went from the room and downstairs. Halfway down he remembered the cards. "What an ass I am!" He started back again.

But Mrs. Bathurst's voice called him from the hall: "What's the matter? Can't you find them? Why, you look as though you'd seen a ghost!"

Bennett put a good face on it; the sight of her brought him to reason. He tried to laugh, but couldn't find any excuse.

"And you talk of riding to-morrow," she said reproachfully. "You're crazy!"

They stood facing on the landing, she in her dark glistening dress and her proud beauty.

"She thinks of me as though I were her son," he thought, seeing her interest and her solicitude.

"I'll make you a cocktail," she said, and took his arm and led him down the stairs, "and afterward you must go to bed. Why, you've only been about for a week and you talk of hunting tomorrow. Why, you're clearly crazy!"

"Yes," said Bennett, "I guess I am."

And then he gave his promise not to think of hunting the next day.

CHAPTER IX.

When John came down the following morning, the foggy mist that had flown all night like wet sails across the country had blown off toward the north and the crisp morning air was clear of rain.

Bennett was the first of the household to come downstairs; as was the fashion in the Bathurst household, where the mistress was half Continental in her habits, he had taken his coffee and eggs and bacon in his own room.

He had not been standing for more than five minutes on the porch facing the drive and the cold dawn when some one came out behind him. It was the lady of the house herself. Mrs. Bathurst wore her pink coat, her white

stock with its diamond horseshoe, her black three-cornered hat, and in her hand she held her riding crop and gloves.

"I suppose you couldn't resist the charm of early rising," she said, with amusement. "I didn't know that anything could get a young man up at five in the morning unless he were pulled out of bed; especially, since you're not going to ride. I don't believe you've had a bit of breakfast."

John, who had scarcely slept, and whose later doze had been disturbed by the fear that he might be too late, met her keen look, for the lady wondered what made him so pale.

Over the roads and the lawns, as they stood side by side on the porch, something like dew rose on the stubborn grass and covered the brown, dry forests, and something like dew lay between the sun and the earth.

"Doesn't it smell good?" she said, drawing her breath. "Gives one the feeling of wanting to swim out into it, of going off somewhere. It's so fresh and marvelously unspoiled."

"It only makes me want to ride like the deuce," Bennett responded. "It's a mean shame that I'm not well enough to go."

"Well, since you can't, since you've given in so gracefully," said Mrs. Bathurst, "let's walk over to the Big Tree Inn. It's only ten minutes and I don't believe it will be too much for you."

She could have suggested nothing that John wanted more. Nothing would be more delightful than to leave the house, its master, Nicholas Pyrme, and the rest behind them, and go away alone with his adored lady.

He refused to take hat or overcoat; and thinking that if they delayed the others would come down and spoil the adventure, Mrs. Bathurst did not urge, and John walked along beside her, his slim young figure tall and slender as a young tree, his bright head high with the pride of his good fortune.

Virginia Bathurst thought her stepsons' friend charming. He had already touched her sympathies when he was a little boy. Standing between the cur-

tains of the dingy, dismantled house, the victim of the auctioneer's hammer, dispossessed and penniless, this little habitant about whom the ruins were falling had appealed to her sympathies years before. She had known his delightful father and it was in affectionate regard for Mr. Bennett that she had originally gone to the auction sale; and there the purchase of a few objects of art, books, etc., had become of secondary interest beside the anxious face of the boy who watched the sale. She had never forgotten the incident or his visit of a few days at Bathurst House.

She had aroused his frank boy admiration, and felt conscious of it. Brusque, slangy, moody as he was, he had even then possessed the quality which made him "fascinating" to the girls, and which had touched the woman in her then. An older man might have displayed the devotion which, although he did not know it, red-headed, freckled little John Bennett had shown this selfsame lady twelve years before.

It was with some such remembrance of him that she had rushed over to the field after his accident and lifted his poor, bruised head upon her knee. It was with some such memory in her mind that with a sudden leap of her heart she had seen the splendid fellow ride his pace, had seen him lifted something like a vision on beautiful Ladybird. John stood out among the commonplace men around him, and when she had seen him fall, for a moment she had covered her face with her hands and been surprised at her excess of personal terror, alarm, and solicitude.

With the perfection of womanliness she had nursed the big chap through. It is not too much to say, he wouldn't have pulled through as he had without that lovely care. She thought with something of pride that her care had not been in vain, as he walked beside her now in the morning, with his vigorous swing, his long steps close to her, toward the town.

Women who are ardent by nature or

possessed of imagination are always sure to be dupes of themselves, as well as a prey to sentiment, and particularly fit to suffer. Mrs. Bathurst was entirely unconscious of anything but a friendly interest in her stepsons' friend.

John could make love to the girls of his own age, he could say what he wanted to, but he was something like the hatter in Alice in Wonderland—a "very poor speaker"—certainly when with his hostess. Their conversations had been few, but Bennett proved an unusual listener, drinking in what she said and storing her opinions deeply away.

She had taken the question of her stepsons' education lightly; trusting to their breeding and their decent points of view to carry them creditably through. She took things easily, otherwise she would not have been able to endure her life with her husband. But from the first this young collegian interested her; she didn't realize how often she had thought about him, about his points of view, about his morals, and just now, in the bright morning light, struck by his pale face and the marks of sleeplessness, she was wondering about his plans for the future.

"Have you been thinking at all what you are going to do when you leave here next week?" The question fell pat with a decision John had made the night before, as he lay sleepless.

"I'm going West." He remembered with a pang as he replied that this venture on his part was the very one thing she had advised him not to do when they talked together.

His response was curt and his intention evidently fixed; she looked at him in some surprise and said: "Oh, really? I suppose money is the thing; and if you do go in for it, you must make a big fortune, Mr. Bennett."

By this time they had ascended the incline to the village street and the clock was striking six. The street was already alive with country people and townsfolk, as well as the gentry, coming to watch the meet or to make part of it. Buggies and light wagons, covered vehicles and smart traps toolled

through the rich sand road. Red coats shone out here and there. The Big Tree Inn blinked with its green vines behind the trees, and about the horse-block the hunters, sleek and slender, thin-flanked and long-legged, gathered—shining bays, grays, and roans—and to the left, the master of the hounds, Donald Dashwood, with his grooms, held the black-and-white hounds in leash.

But Virginia Bathurst's figure was the one that John Bennett looked at; supple, slender as a girl's, there was a sweep about her, a bloom, a fire that made her different to them all. John felt that she might be a queen at a royal meet.

"She has a proud face," he said to himself. "I wonder who would dare to offend her."

He could almost think he saw a picture of her on some regal hunting preserve and read out "*The Queen Rides to the Hounds To-day.*"

Nicholas Pyrnne and the others had come up; her horse stood at the block, and Virginia's husband lifted her into the saddle.

As attractive as was the scene about the inn John saw little but the figure of the woman on her roan horse, her body like a poppy in the pink cloth of her coat, her dark little head set well on her neck. She gathered up the reins between her hands and moved away.

John jumped up on the big white horse-block under the trees and stood there, the one unsporting figure in his blue serge clothes. He was out of it, a miserable bystander in the face of such ripping sport.

Jack and Peter, Junior, had come up with Miss Cornwallis. After the calls and shouts and sallies and hubbub, the panting of the dogs, Bennett called over to Dashwood:

"Say! Think I'll drive over and meet you at the Crossroads."

But there was no response to this. He said it again more loudly, hoping she might hear him. Pyrnne was at Mrs. Bathurst's stirrup, shortening it; she was bending down to him, laugh-

ing, unconscious of the young man on the horse-block who spoke for her alone.

John thrust his hands in his pockets and glowered at the gay, cheerful scene.

"Go home, Johnny," Jack called to him, "and keep Miss Forsyth company; she didn't come."

And Miss Cornwallis added: "Oh, do look after Cynthia, won't you, Mr. Bennett? She was too tired to get up this morning; I hated to leave her."

Bennett muttered an ungracious word under his breath.

The house seemed like a prison into which he couldn't bring himself to return, for all the world had gone to the meet.

The hounds were freed; at a long blast from the horn they dashed away with a cry like mad creatures, flashing the village street through, pounded after by the hunters. Whether or not the words that John had given out that he would ride to the Crossroads had reached her, Mrs. Bathurst didn't look toward him until they started away. Then she gave a glance back and saw him as he stood—six feet of blue serge, of anger and spleen—glowering out into the sun-filled space before him, the light on his bare head. She waved her crop gayly and his passionate, angry eyes followed her pink coat until a curve in the road hid her from sight. Then the buggies and wagons filled up the road again, a butcher's cart slunk out and rattled down the street, the loiterers and hangers-on about the village post office and the taverns straggled up the steps onto the porch of the Big Tree Inn. The odor of johnnycake and coffee and bacon came out to further assure the world that the ordinary course of events would pursue the tenor of its way, in spite of the gentry's hunt.

Pleasure had died out for the young man who had started out feeling like Adam with his Eve in the morning of the world, as they walked in the dew from Bathurst House. Now the commonplaceness of the objects before him gave him a physical disgust. For the first time in twenty-two years he was

a victim of ennui; until the hunt returned he shouldn't know how to live!

He walked up the steps of the inn, into the bar. He had drunk for pleasure, for good fellowship plenty of times in his life, but never before for misery. He ordered his drink and when it stood before him on the counter he turned his glass between his hands, a frown on his face. The bartender, who had gone into the office, came back, his napkin over his arm.

"Somebody wants John Bennett on the telephone," he said, with the extraordinary thin-voice familiarity of the upper-State servitors.

As though Mrs. Bathurst could have telephoned him from her saddle, at some hedge or ditch, he tore off.

Bathurst House had called him up.
"Oh, Mr. Bennett, did you see Mrs. Bathurst? . . . Did she tell you that we are to take the dogcart and follow over to Mooreland Farms and see the meet pass? . . . Oh, I'm all right, thanks. . . . Want to go awfully, don't you? . . . You'll be right over?"

John dashed from the booth and without stopping rushed from the inn.

"Hi!" the bartender called after him. "That there cocktail!"

"Drink it yourself!" John flung him a dollar and was out of the inn, down the steps, and into the road before the man could follow.

"Here, you, take me over to Bathurst House, will you?"

He held up the butcher's cart and climbed into the seat, by the man's side. His face lit up, he jollied the butcher boy, drank in the fresh odors of the country, and his cheeks began to warm.

In a couple of hours, if only for a second, he should see her again as she shot across a meadow, and he might watch that dash of pink that made his heart leap every time he thought about it.

An hour later, driving across the country with Miss Forsyth, John calmed to something like reason and common sense. For a good part of

the night he had pondered over his state of nerves and his folly, and he was able to see that he was very much of an idiot, that he needed sound, strong measures to cure his imbecility. Cynthia Forsyth had welcomed him back, the only other guest at Bathurst, had insisted that he take some kind of refreshment that went by the name of early luncheon before they started, and a pretty girl is at her best when she urges a man to be comfortable. Cynthia had served John herself and sat later by his side in the buggy, not in the least like a girl who had passed a horrid night, who has been bothered to death by her host, and who is gently, though truly, unhappy about her own unfortunate love affair.

The young people rode out from Bathurst to follow the meet in a classic buggy, a long-stepping horse between the thills. The Washington girl by Bennett's side, after feeding him and giving him to drink, did her best to amuse the absorbed young man. Selfishly suffering and sentimental as John was, nothing would have interested him greatly but to talk of himself or Mrs. Bathurst. But Cynthia did not lead up to the subject of the lady.

She referred to the "licking" John had given his schoolfellow at the party, and from here John went on to tell her something about his boyhood.

"There's Jones' Mills"—he pointed with his whip across country—"there's the steeple of the church they told us to look out for. We'll make it all right by this road to the left, and I guess they'll cross us there."

They were within three miles of the point where they were to wait for the meet, and the young man hurried his horse wantonly uphill. On either side, between low fences, spread the meadows of the valley country—stubble and dry furrow, ditched and harvested fields, all first-class hunting land, with deeps and curves and little knolls of forest-like shadows over the hills.

"Of course, there's just a chance that they may not pass."

Cynthia could have borne the fact very well. But her companion was more sure.

"Oh, I guess they'll come by, all right." He couldn't imagine that he would be disappointed in that flying sight of *her*.

"Speaking of shooting," John said with inadvertency, "Mrs. Bathurst gave me my first gun. I was a little shaver; it was twelve years ago."

They rolled down one big hill and climbed slowly up the other, the horse's breathing, the rustle of the wheels, the creak of the leather, and the song of the thills in their thongs an undertone to all they said. John told Cynthia the story of the auction at his old home on James Street. It was nothing but a boyish, quick, crude tale, without any embellishment, but under his words his romance lay, and its golden thread ran through the tale. It was unmistakable, even to this girl.

The reins lay loose on the horse's back, the whip hung loose over the dashboard; John's head was bent, his eyes, smiling and intent, were fixed on some scene not in the Tallahoe meadows. He talked out his secret, kept so jealously, he brought it before the girl's eyes until it was plain as day, and though told by a college sport in the simplest of terms, without diction or rhetoric, the story made a picture. Cynthia could see the boy, his little heart bursting as they auctioned off his father's gun; Cynthia could hear his sob as he shut himself up in his small bedroom, and Cynthia could see Mrs. Bathurst sitting on John's bed, in her spick-and-span dress, her hand lying white on the velvet brown of the corduroy hunting clothes.

"Wasn't it bully of her?"

"Yes," said Miss Forsyth gravely. "I guess no woman ever gave a boy anything he wanted more. I can never forget how that gun in the corner of my room made me feel." He laughed softly. "I don't doubt I made a bally fool of myself over it, I'm sure I hugged it. I can remember now how the wood shone on the handle. I've never really wanted anything *since*,"

he boasted, with young arrogance, "but it has been sure to come along, sooner or later."

"You're a very lucky fellow."

"Gosh!" The laugh went a little out of his voice as he thought of the much-wanted something which would never come. "I don't know about *that*! I suppose a man's luck *has* to change some time."

John's story had brought him overwhelmingly to the one subject in which he was interested and to the point of their drive, and left him meditative. It had the opposite effect on Miss Forsyth. As though she didn't want to give herself time to think of anything whatsoever, she now led the conversation to herself, and John, half listening, was pleasantly entertained. He rather liked her giggle, as Bathurst called it, and he liked *her* thoroughly, and as far as he could see anything else in the great white light of his infatuation, he saw this little candle throw its gentle beams.

"Let's stand here." He drew the horse up on the hilltop. "They ought to come along out of that patch of woods about now."

A clear horn blast cut the air. The dogs flew out first, Peter Bathurst followed, and half a dozen others seemed to shake out of the little woods and scatter over the fields.

Miss Forsyth, standing up in the buggy, cried: "There's Grace Cornwallis! Doesn't she ride like a breeze! She's the first of the women; I do hope she'll get in at the death."

Peter Bathurst, Senior, came last; his horse had never hunted before and he was in a fury with her.

"Here," he cried, riding up to the buggy, "help me fix this cursed curb, will you, Bennett? I didn't expect to get in at the death with this infernal cow I'm riding; but neither did I expect to have to stop and milk her in the middle of the fields! She can't go at all."

"Where," asked Cynthia, "are the others?"

"Nick's horse went lame, caved in at Mooreland Farms, and my wife

couldn't think of anything better to do than to drop out and stop over with him there. I guess they'll get lunch of some kind. They've telephoned for a trap to come for them and they'll go right home. You'll come on over to luncheon at the Lewisons, you two, won't you?"

John set free the bit he was holding.

"I guess that's all right." And Bathurst started away as the last riders pelted from the woods and rode over toward the opposite fields.

For a moment the buggy with the two young people rested on the knoll, then John turned his horse about and, without asking the girl where she wanted to go, started home.

Cynthia wanted to go nowhere but where John should choose, and she sat back quietly, waiting for him to speak—it must have been a wait of over a mile.

The bitterness at his heart was cruel. The horse he drove, the reins he held between his knees, the lovely midday country on either side, the calls of the late birds, the peace and charm of the land as they drove through, the dear, kind little creature at his side, whatever joy and goodness there might have been in it all blotted itself out and he suffered with jealousy at the thought of another man's wife in the company of yet another man. He couldn't help it, he didn't call up a lot of moral strength to fight against it, he was flying before it, and for some time he let himself chafe and suffer. No doubt he didn't understand her at all, this older, beautiful woman who awakened as well his admiration and his chivalry—she knew life a great deal better than he did, she understood it, she knew what she wanted, and as far as he was concerned, of course he wasn't in her consideration at all. No, there was no doubt about that. Why should he be? A bitter smile curved his young lips as he thought, and the brightness died out, leaving him pale and gray, the lines set and hardened.

He couldn't bear it, he wouldn't bear it. She loved hunting, she had said she did, she had talked about this meet

for weeks, she was the best rider on the field, she had a bully horse, there was no reason why she shouldn't have gotten the brush, and she must have wanted the trial. Why should she knock off with that man and spend her hunting morning in a farmhouse with him? If her husband took it easily, well, that was Bathurst's business; as far as John Bennett was concerned he had no right to her, anyway—to her he was nothing but a foolish boy, it was none of his business, and he wasn't going to let it make him suffer like this; he was going to kill it right now. He wouldn't take it home and sleep with it another night, this unsatisfied, dreadful love. He was going to set himself free.

The idea of leaving Bathurst House in the morning with nothing to fill his mind, with nothing to help him in his sacrifice, was impossible.

"See," Miss Forsyth broke in, "there ahead of us in the road is a squirrel. Isn't he pretty?"

Cynthia's hands were clasped in her lap, her charming face was as sweet as a brier rose. With a tremendous impulse which he pushed on by all his force of character and by his great need of help and comfort and support, John said:

"Next week I'm starting out West. As I told you before, I don't know whether you take any interest in it or not—I'd like to think you do. I'm going to start right in there to make some money. I've got a little opening and I guess I can pull through."

"Of course," Cynthia said, and he could hear that she was breathing fast, "of course you'll pull through, you're that kind. You know you said that everything you wanted came your way."

Bennett started to speak, but just then, not very far distant, came the silver note of the hunting horn. He gathered up his reins, spoke to the horse, touched him with the whip, and they flew along the road, scattering the squirrel to flight, turned a curve which brought them out to an open view, and there, a little below them,

down over the valley, from their little eminence, they saw the dots of scarlet and the flying hunters pushing toward a single point.

"Poor fox!" Miss Forsyth said. "I think they've run him down."

"Do you know," Bennett said excitedly, "I believe we are at the kill. See, the whole lot of them are stopping there. Hear the dogs!"

She leaned a little forward and stood up by his side, holding on to the buggy seat. As she stood so John Bennett turned about and looked up at her. It was very hard to find just the words. He might have said: "Look here, I want you to help me to pull my life straight." If he had done so, Cynthia Forsyth would have understood.

John said: "Will you marry me?"

It was sudden, entirely unexpected, the words in all the world that Cynthia Forsyth wanted to hear, and they were said by the right man. She stood quite firmly in the buggy, held her lips tighter and, incapable of making them say the word she wanted to, she shook her pretty head.

Overwhelmed with surprise, John said: "Do you mean to say that you turn me down?"

Miss Forsyth sank back on the seat she had left.

"Please don't ask me," she whispered. "Please! I must say no."

Nothing could have surprised him more. His first sensation was foolish anger, dreadful anger against her, then he remembered that she was a flirt. He had thought she loved him, that his suit with her was as good as won, and that he had only to ask to make her marry him.

He started his horse, not once turning his eyes to the field or to the gathered hunters at the kill. They drove along for some time in perfect silence. The girl's heart beat so hard that he might have heard it, but he heard nothing but his foolish resentment and his wounded pride. Everything was against him, nobody wanted to have anything to do with him. For the first time a sense of unhappy discouragement came over his young heart; Tal-

lahoe was a cursed place for him, he had made one dreadful blunder, he had fallen into a deplorable snare, and now he had made an ass of himself again.

These were Bennett's first feelings, and before he could follow them logically out and turn again and ask her again, woo and court her, as he should have done, he heard, they both heard, behind them a call. Across Miss Forsyth's refusal came the voice of Mrs. Bathurst.

"Hello," she cried, "you two!" And the next moment she had ridden beside the buggy; in her scarlet coat and small hat she reined her horse directly by Bennett's side.

"I'll ride home with you, if you don't mind. Have you seen the meet? Wasn't it mean that I had to drop out? I thought I'd catch up, but it's too late now. Wasn't it a pretty sight?"

Bennett looked up at her; and her face, brilliant, sparkling, and her voice made him with one great throb of his heart thank Heaven that the little girl at his side had turned him down.

CHAPTER X.

There was a hunt dinner that night at Bathurst House and a ball, and young Bennett was the only man in a black coat—he wouldn't wear the pink because he had flunked the meet. Not dancing, he felt himself to be a rank outsider, but for nothing in the world would he have sneaked upstairs and missed what sight he could get of his hostess.

He was grateful to Miss Forsyth for not coming down to the ball. He had learned from Peter, Junior, that she was seedy again and not to appear; otherwise, he had decided that the only decent thing for him to do would be to leave Tallahoe and go on to Buffalo. This, as he expressed it, would have "made him wild"; he wanted to see his hostess, and she was well worth looking at this night. The violet color of her gown became her well, its sheath of rich tone brought her firm white flesh into the fairest contrast. She wore pearls—pear-

shaped drops of them in her ears, a collar of them, with bands of diamonds; and there was a velvet sumptuousness, a regal look about her that every one of her guests admired. The Buffalo papers next day spoke of her as "queenly," and mentioned that Worth had made Mrs. Bathurst's dress for the Hunt Ball.

Nicholas Pyrnce, whom she had left to eat humble pie, alone in the farmhouse, when she had ridden off to join the young people in their buggy, said to her when they had finished dancing:

"I'm going back to Albany to-morrow, Virginia, and I'm not going to see you any more."

"You're rather a coward, my poor Nicholas."

He smiled, not seeming to have heard her call him so.

"At any rate, unless you send for me, I shan't be around again."

Pyrne waited with her near the musicians, between the dances.

"Don't boast," Mrs. Bathurst said. "You must never say to the fountain: 'I won't drink of your waters.'"

"I shall not, however," Pyrne repeated, "see you any more unless you need me, and then, you know, Virginia, you have but to send the word."

"Tell me," she asked abruptly, "do you think that Peter has been flirting with Cynthia Forsyth?"

Nicholas shrugged, without answering.

"She's been in a state of nerves, and although I've tried tactfully I couldn't find out *what* was the matter with her."

Her friend smiled. "Why, I told you the other night that she was in love with Bennett."

"I'm responsible for her to her mother," she replied.

"Nonsense, my dear lady! You can't turn a pretty girl of twenty loose and make a handsome woman of——"

"Don't mind me," laughed Mrs. Bathurst. "I was afraid my husband had annoyed her."

And Nicholas said coolly: "I think it's more than likely that he has."

She flushed. "How horrid of him, how disgusting!"

Here the partner who was to dance with her crossed the floor. It was her husband, well groomed, well dressed, with the important swagger of the man who runs the show. He might well be proud of the leading lady; and he was proud of her, she was superb. He had been temperate at dinner in order to dance with her, and he was steady now.

The dinner had been an early one and the dancing was short. As the household had been up since dawn the guests went early.

Bennett had sulked through the evening, giving himself up to his moods, watching the passing of the beautiful figure of his hostess, feeling miserable and disheartened. He went to his room after bidding her good-by and thanking her, for he had determined to go away on the first train the following day. There were a cynicism in his voice and a look of weariness on his face that at his age would have struck her as being almost droll if she had not thoroughly understood his state of mind.

He had barely closed his door for the night, going into the room where she had nursed him and where he had passed so many hours of real unhappiness, when a knock fell and he threw the door open so wide and swiftly that it showed how well he knew the sound and how he welcomed it. Mrs. Bathurst was standing there.

"Let me come in a minute, won't you? I'm going to sit down and talk to you a bit."

Looking as though he would forbid her, the face of the blond young man flushed and his half-sullen expression did not change. Her frankness, her kind nod to him, her coming as she did when all the house was rustling by in the corridors to rest, her clear, sweet voice as she called him "John" showed how maternally she thought of him—like this she would have gone in to see Jack and Junior at the end of the day.

Mrs. Bathurst took her place in his big leather chair, over by his bureau, close to his outlay of simple toilet articles. As she talked to him her hand

and fingers touched the toilet cover, one by one she lightly touched the little articles, the ebony button hook, the shoe horn. They were sacred to him from that night.

The dark folds of her lustrous dress fell about her on the floor. Against the chair her head melted into the shadow. There was a little light behind her, and out of it her face and her white neck and arms gleamed.

"You haven't been quite frank with me."

Bennett stood rigidly before her. She was quite right there! Frank with her? "Jove!" he thought. "I wonder what she'd say if I should be frank!"

"You don't mind my coming in, do you, like this, as I would go to Jack or Junior?"

He was able to assure her that he did not mind.

"You see, we've talked quite a lot about things together, while you were convalescing, and you took me into your confidence a little, didn't you? So you won't think I'm prying or curious, only friendly, if I want to know a little about your plans before you go? Sit down. Let's talk for quarter of an hour."

He took his place in the chair next hers and tried to listen to what she said and to think of what she was saying. They had begun this day together; when she had come downstairs she had found him in the mists of the morning. It seemed that they were going to close the day side by side. There was something awfully sweet about it.

"You've been too kind for anything," he managed to tell her, "and you know how I feel about it, every bit."

"Oh, taking care of you was more fun than anything I've known for a long time," she answered affectionately, looking at him without the shadow of any feeling but pure kindness. "I played trained nurse pretty well, didn't I? I *loved* it! But I *don't* think you've been quite fair. I mean to say you let me be an awful bore with my

advice when you were ill—and all the time you were laughing in your sleeve."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, shocked. "I never did such a thing! I wanted to hear everything you thought. If I've had any plans they haven't been worth shucks."

He was not the kind to make a dash for sympathy; his friend knew it. Sitting there before her, big and strong, his beautiful head well placed on shoulders whose strength had never been tried, she thought of him as a boy, disappointed in first love, too proud to show his hurt.

"You're really going West, directly?"

"I shall see Doctor Brainard first, and talk with him." He gave a half-embarrassed laugh. "I guess none of my plans are cast iron."

"I wish you'd talk with Nicholas Pyrne," Mrs. Bathurst suggested cordially. "He's an awfully good adviser."

"I wouldn't bother anybody. That Western job's a sure thing for a fellow with a little capital. But it's perfectly ripping of you to care," he added gratefully.

The door was open and in the hallway he heard Jack and Junior go by and the latter stuck his head in.

"Giving John a curtain lecture? You'd better listen to her, Bennett, she's a corker, and if she tells you 'not to' you'd better *not*! She *knows!*"

Junior withdrew his head and the curtain dropped its folds. His were the last steps to pass the door.

The lady asked a few practical questions about John's plans, questions which, with averted eyes, the young chap answered as well as he might. His mind was too overwhelmed by the consciousness of her to be lucid on any other subject. He was saying to himself: "In just about a minute she'll get up and go—she'll be gone."

And in a few minutes she rose. As he got up heavily out of his chair he raised his eyes to her and she saw in them a dumbness of misery which she took to be his disappointed love for Cynthia Forsyth. She had not been

able yet to bring up the subject. John was too silent, he was too shy. Once or twice she had thought: "The poor boy hasn't known how to make love, that's the trouble."

There was a divine kindness in her face as she stood there, and he felt that he was a boor to be so silent before her. She didn't dream the fiery struggle that was going on in him, and that he was blind with the rush of his senses—deafened by the cry within him, and weakened with the effort to keep back from her ears the call of his young being. But he must speak or she would think him a fool.

"You've always been ripping to me, Mrs. Bathurst, ever since I was a little kid." He pointed over to the corner. "Ever since the night when father's gun stood there, behind the door."

She laughed. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "You've no idea how amusing you were, how funny. Why, you couldn't even thank me, you were as red as fire."

"As red as my hair, I guess," Bennett said, a little bitterly. "Well, I can't thank you now, either. You've been a perfect brick."

These were far from being the words which his heart suggested. These hurt him—they were wrung out of him; he had other things to say—things that came imperiously—words he didn't know before were in the vocabulary, and that he had never used. He was being taught by passion. But he held and forced the endearments back and put lame, clumsy phrases in their place. Always smiling, with the delightful little crinkles around her mouth and eyes and the cleft in her chin which John adored, Virginia Bathurst said: "You've nothing whatsoever to thank me for, John Bennett; I'm naturally glad you're well and able to go. But I'd like to feel that you went away happy. Of course, I know you'll be successful. I shall miss you."

He said "Oh," under his breath. The curtain fell before the open door and though no sound whatsoever could be heard from his room in the hall, she had dropped her voice.

She came near him—put that beautiful hand of hers on the sleeve of his coat.

"My dear boy," she said very sweetly, "don't think I'm an awful meddler and you haven't said a word to me, but I know you'll forgive my asking you——"

He had never been so near her; things began to come true. The stuff which his daring imagination had cut into, the woof of his day dreams and night dreams was beginning to be real. Her dress held her lightly, it almost touched him, her lips, her arms, her bare, beautiful neck; the lines of her throat, her chin, the cleft in it, the warm bloom of her coloring, the perfume of her, the fragrance of her, the woman she was—— "She smiled at me like that," memory said, "when I was a boy."

"I don't like to think you're having a hard time," she was going on, "but I don't want to intrude on your confidence, John."

He murmured: "I don't know what you mean."

No, he wouldn't look at her any more. The sense of her hand on his sleeve went to his very flesh.

"You see, Cynthia's here in my care and she's told me."

He broke the spell violently. "She did, did she? Well, that's all right."

His friend looked startled. "Why, you bear it splendidly. Of course you would, you're a sport. She's a dear, she's a darling; you know I wanted her for Jack, but of course we've given that up long ago. She's very young; don't give up hope, don't take this as definite."

The young man she was consoling said rapidly: "Oh, but I do, I do take it definitely! She can't go back on her word now."

His tone, his manner were so unexpected that her hand dropped from the arm of the inconsolable lover.

"Oh, you *mustn't* let it make you bitter, John. Why, just think how men have waited and——"

He thrust his hands behind his back and clinched them there.

"It doesn't seem to be any secret," he said, "since Miss Forsyth has told you. I did ask her to marry me and she refused, and I've never been so glad of anything in my life."

Virginia looked at him in despair; she had come warm from the confidence of the pretty girl who had cried in her arms.

"Why, you don't care for her!"

"Not a rap."

"Really?" She looked at him astonished.

"I was an ass," John said heartily. "I don't know *why* I made such a fool of myself! Of course, if she had accepted me I would have stood by, but I don't care a thing for any girl alive."

She laughed softly in spite of herself, the adorable laugh of a woman who knows life and understands, and who is amused by a fresh experience.

"Really, John, you're perfectly shocking. Why, you're a cruel flirt! You mustn't do such things, above all, not with a girl like Cynthia."

And he agreed with feeling: "You can bet I won't; the next girl might take me."

"I'm almost angry with you," she went on seriously, and then she stopped, for she didn't want him to think for a moment that Cynthia was unhappy. She put out her hand indulgently.

"Good night, you bad boy. I came to console you, I thought you were in the blues. I wonder if you are quite frank with me. You're such a sport, you know." Then she added: "But I don't think you need me."

"I do need you."

He didn't know the voice that spoke, nor did Virginia, and she didn't know, as these words passed his lips, the man who stood in the place of John Bennett.

"I don't need anything else or want anything else."

She paled and looked at him, startled; then, mistress of the situation, she tried to smile and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Foolish boy," she murmured, "foolish boy!"

But the boy had gone and the man, swayed by the passionate tide of life, the vast ocean rising in his heart, was not to be withstood. Without another word or protest he put his arms around her and poured upon her face and eyes the kisses he had dreamed of, with all the ardor of his soul and all the intensity of the first young love. He sighed as he feasted, as a youth might sigh into a bed of roses, and then, as he felt her eyelids, her cheek, her hair against his lips, he gave a cry and set her free suddenly; and before he could speak or put his hands toward her again, she had lifted the curtains and gone, and he was alone with his triumph and his despair.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Bathurst gained her own room, and, sitting down on her *chaise longue*, covered her face with her hands. Although there was no one to see her and only the familiar objects of her own room were around her, she had the sensation of being acutely observed, and she blushed, and her eyes grew young again, like a girl's.

"I've never been so surprised in my life, never!" She laughed a little and her laugh was tremulous, and she gave a long sigh.

"John Bennett, that little boy, that boy! How *dare* he? Why, he's mad. How perfectly ridiculous!"

If it had been madness that had made him do what he had done, it was the sweetest lunacy, there was no doubt about it. As though she still felt the caresses that had rained upon her, she passed her hand over her brow and cheek, over her neck, and flushed again. Her words to Nicholas Pyrne on the horse-show grounds came back to her: "A red-headed boy! Why, he's a man, my dear Nicholas, a beautiful man." And this was what John Bennett had grown to be; he had matured terribly, marvelously, and in the knowledge that he had showered upon her the first love of his heart there was something so beautiful that her own heart thrilled. How wild of him, how bold of him!

She would not see him again—he would go to-morrow at two o'clock.

"Of course he'll write me a long letter. I foresee what it will be like—full of apologies, of prayers for pardon; he will think he has insulted me in my own house, he'll be dreadfully ashamed. Poor John!"

She had gone in to talk to him in the friendliest manner, to encourage him about Cynthia. She wanted to give him hope and her consolation had not been needed. What a shocking flirt he was—why, he didn't care at all for Cynthia. And now where she had said "poor John" she said "poor Cunny" with greater enjoyment of the adjective. The girl's image faded out and nothing but John remained in the foreground and stayed. She saw him as he sat before her in his room with glowing eyes that eluded hers. They were a boy's eyes still; she had seen tears on those lashes, years ago, she had watched them when Bennett was delirious at the Big Tree Inn, and she had then in taking care of him learned every line of the young face, every turn and moulding of that beautiful head with its strong, close-growing hair, reddish at the ends, and the determined chin and the fresh lips.

He stood up before her now as she mused like a youthful Adam, and there was a light about him, a radiance. She had thought he didn't know how to win Cynthia Forsyth—or how to make love. He wasn't the novice she had fancied! He had learned very perfectly and very suddenly. He had been like primeval man in his daring, and she was too real a woman not to be touched by his passion.

As she mentally approached a danger point, John's altered voice seemed again to say to her: "*I do need you—you're the only one I need.*" And the blood began to dye her throat and cheek; for half a second her heart rocked as though it were in a cradle swung by the biggest forces of the world. She said aloud into her silent room: "No, John Bennett, you *don't* need me, and I'm the one thing in the world that you mustn't want."

She rose as if she hoped by walking up and down the room very fast to dispel the dangerous emotions that were gaining way. She unfastened the jewels from her hair and neck and ears and, denuded of her ornaments, looked defiantly in her dressing glass.

"Heavens!" she murmured. "How ridiculous! Have I lost my *last* remnant of common sense? I ought to be ashamed of myself. He must not love me. If he really loves me he must cease to do so." And she tried to think of it as only the natural outcome of his long propinquity to her, as a passing fancy that would soon die away.

"He will go to-morrow, I won't answer his letter; there'll be the question in his mind that he has offended me—then he will forget."

But the determination of her remembrance of those last few moments in his room forced her, frightened her into knowing that John Bennett did more than fancy her, and that not only passion ran through those furtive, seeking, wonderful caresses, but love.

Virginia sighed and, rising from her toilet table, completed her preparations for the night.

But before she could decide to put out her light, the musing woman found that she was absolutely called upon to reckon with this horrid self that, unless it is forgotten, keeps the human being from peace. She confessed now that she had been thinking about John Bennett for weeks, she had been selfish with him, and she had mentally and sentimentally kept him to herself. Here was a lovely girl under her roof with whom he would undoubtedly have fallen in love if he had not been brought into contemplation of the older woman's more subtle charms. But this, her own condemnation of her conduct, of her thoughtlessness, possibly, was not what she dreaded. She was a big-hearted, large-minded woman and could pardon others and pardon herself. Nothing in her life had been so dear as the nursing of John Bennett. No presence under her roof had been so bright and so dear to her as his.

"He will go to-morrow very early," she thought. "I shall be very angry with him and I shall never see him again; I shall try not to see him again! Why, I'm almost old enough to be his mother—and what am I going to do when he is definitely gone?"

She had brought herself face to face with something she wanted to say before she tried to sleep. "What is John thinking now? What is he doing now?" But she couldn't linger with those thoughts. "I let him kiss me! I didn't resist! I submitted to him! What in Heaven's name does he think of me?"

She put out her hand and touched the light's button and let the welcome darkness come between her and John Bennett's thoughts, whatever they might be.

Not a woman of aimless meditations, a strong woman and a very real one, unwilling to meet the problem which her senses put before her, unwilling to let herself relive again those moments in John's arms, Virginia with a mighty will thrust the memories back, bravely. She refused to answer the question that pounded at her heart. She couldn't admit the figure of the man from whom she had run away. She couldn't let John Bennett, big, beautiful John Bennett, in; neither could she do without him.

She smiled in the darkness a bewitching smile. If she could have seen how the crinkles came around her lips and her eyes!

"Foolish, foolish boy!" And the word was a wand by which she made the little red-headed boy who stood between the curtains in the James Street house appear again—he looked at her with his eager eyes.

Little John Bennett, grown fairy-like, adorably small and safe, came and sat beside her, and she could turn her lovely face toward him without fear. Between them lay the corduroy hunting clothes, and her hand rested upon them, and Virginia Bathurst cried out to the vision:

"John Bennett, John Bennett, why did you grow up? Why didn't you stay a little boy? Now that you have

grown up, I don't know what is going to happen to us both!"

CHAPTER XII.

The soil of the State in which John Bennett found himself and where he was to strike his roots if he expected to have any kind of a harvest, was strange ground. But he was an American and therefore a citizen of the world, and he took his place quickly. He bought a half interest in a lemon ranch in the valley near Santa Barbara and cast his luck in with Bob Furniss, a man from Boston.

His chum found him good company, an all-round sport, sympathetic in every point of view but one. He was not sympathetic on the topic of women. Furniss couldn't interest his partner on this subject. The other man claimed to be a woman hater.

The pungent air of the groves had sickened him at first with its sweetness, and everything had been bitter and hateful when he came out to Chiulavista. He felt himself an outsider and a man doomed to be unhappy from his youth.

Before a month had gone by that very youth had rebelled and Bennett regained his balance with rather a comforting ease. He hated to acknowledge that he took real pleasure in life, or in his riding and his work, and in making a success of his venture, but surely and kindly the air into which he breathed love sighs began to make him new again.

Nevertheless, "the woman hater" in spite of his undamaged health and spirits was a lover such as Bob Furniss would never be in all his practical life.

But he never wrote to his lady, who waited for the boyish apology in vain, for he didn't ask to be forgiven and he had gone away in all his triumph, and if she remembered him at all she was obliged to remember him as an ardent delinquent.

He didn't deny himself the pleasure of thinking of her in his exile, and he took her with him everywhere. In the clear atmosphere of Chiulavista she

moved between the line of lemon groves, rode with him over the country on a horse by his side; she was like a girl with him, the difference in their age entirely vanished; sometimes, drawing near in his fancy to this visionary woman, the young man saw that she had become so much of a girl that she almost lost the resemblance to Virginia.

It was long before he forgot how he had held her in his arms, and it broke his heart at the end of two years to find that he couldn't *quite* recall the perfume of her gown, and that the memory of the subtle scent had become as faint as flowers on a distant height whose breath is only fetched by a capacious breeze.

Then one night among the mail was a newspaper, one whole page of the supplement of which was devoted to the picture of Mrs. Peter Bathurst, at Newport. Indifferent as such portraits usually are, this one was successful; the pose was queenly, the face was alluring.

John Bennett lay on his narrow bed that night, his arms above his head, smiling into the dark. He was seeing with a painful vividness Mrs. Peter Bathurst. He saw her pearls in her hair and around her throat, and the violet dress; he found now that he could perfectly recall its touch and its perfume, as he could recall the sweetness of the woman and the sense of her. He held out his arms with a low cry in the dark.

A month or two later Mrs. Bathurst, after passing the day on the yacht, where her husband offered lobster, terrapin, and champagne to a foreign prince, came back to Newport alone by the tender, for she had promised to ride before dinner with a friend. All the way in, all the way up to The Belfries, as the Bathurst Newport place was called, all during the time when she was dressing for her ride, and later, as she rode beside the Englishman, she had a singular feeling of elation, a presentiment of some awfully good luck. She told the Marquis of

Penhaven about it and took the augur to be all for herself.

"If you're in such good spirits," said the marquis, "why don't you give me a little happiness?"

"I'm riding with you," Virginia replied.

"Unless it ends the way Browning's poem does——"

And she interrupted him: "For Heaven's sake, don't ask *me* to end anything of Browning's!"

They had finished their ride and were on their way back to The Belfries and in a few moments would come in full cry of their kind. The marquis leaned over to his companion and put his hand on the pommel of her saddle.

"Won't you give me one bit of hope? Give me," the Englishman persisted, "the right to go away happy."

Virginia listened almost eagerly because she hoped to hear in what he was saying some sound which would tell her that the joy which the day promised her was about to declare itself, then she suddenly pushed his hand away. There was nothing in what he said out of the commonplace. She shook her head and spoke to her horse, and the Englishman, as he set the animal free, said savagely: "I hope that Bathurst will drink himself to death."

"If he did," Bathurst's wife responded tartly, "it wouldn't make the least bit of difference between us. Please don't speak to me of this again."

In the ride home there was nothing, nothing in the brisk pace of their horses that fetched them to the door of The Belfries, to justify Virginia's exuberance. The fact that she was making a man unhappy did not cloud her sense of something good to come, "the song of a secret bird" sang deliciously deep down in her heart.

They crossed the big hall of The Belfries, where several groups of her guests and visitors sat around the tea tray, and the Marquis of Penhaven left her side. Without going upstairs to bathe and dress, she went through the wide-open door of the porch, which framed a picture of the sea, and below the gray rocks the water spread away,

a white yacht here and there, like a midsummer butterfly on a shining field.

There was a fresh breeze, and Virginia, with her face turned toward the water, drank in the salt perfume. The air touched her on the brow and cheeks, she breathed in with delight the peerless evening, warm with late summer, yet with autumn vigor on the wings of the wind.

Down the far end of the porch, as she raised her eyes, she saw a man standing, looking, as she did, out on the water. His back was to her, he was bareheaded, his feet were set well apart, his head thrown back. There were several tall men in Newport, with shoulders like Atlas. Virginia wondered which one of the young fellows this was, then realized that there wasn't but one head like *that* in the world!

She went quickly down the porch to the visitor, and when there was not more than two hundred feet between them she had time to undergo her sequence of emotions. She heard him speak to her and she gave him her hand.

"Hello, John Bennett!" She tried to laugh and found that she couldn't quite make it as natural as she wished to. "How d'you do? Where did you come from? Do the boys know you're here? Whom have you seen?"

"Nobody. I came out here to wait."

"Till some one discovered you?"

"Yes, till you did."

She could laugh now and had her voice in hand. *This* was the happiness! *This* was the prophecy, *this* was what had come with her all the way in from the yacht!

"How long have you been here?"

"About ten minutes."

"I've been riding. Do you still ride?"

"I've almost lived on a horse for two years."

"How brown you are, how *thin*! How old you've grown! How you've changed!"

She was aware that he had not let her hand free. She drew it away and began to settle her stiff cravat and her hair. She took off her hat and swung

it on her arm. She bared her head without coquetry, knowing that around the brows there were little touches of gray.

"Do you know I haven't heard a word from you in two years?"

"Yes," he answered, "but I've fetched all that mail with me. I'll read it to you some day."

"Tell me now. I believe you've got some secret to tell."

She was taking him in as she smiled at him, as though he had been a sailor boy just home after a long cruise; she looked at him as though she wanted to read in one glance the romances of every port in his sunburned face and his eyes.

His eyes were blue as the sea, and a perusal of the clear bright face was so devoid of result, the curve of his beautiful lips, the lines of his face told her so little, that she exclaimed humorously:

"I believe you've been in prison, or else that you're married."

Bennett replied: "I've been in prison, all right, although it was a big open-air one. As the boys must have told you, if you cared to ask, I've been West on my lemon ranch all this time. You ought to know my partner, he's a winner, Bob Furniss, from Boston. I want to tell you all about it," he said eagerly, "from start to finish. It's such a bully riding country." John came close to her. "It's been a prison, but I didn't dare come out of it. I never rode but I wanted you to ride there with me; I never took a breath of that splendid air but I wanted you to breathe it, too."

He had taken both her hands in his big tanned hand, with the rough callouses of the reins across it. Her hand seemed to sink in his like snow and to melt there.

"I ran away like a coward and a thief. I didn't want you to forgive me, so I didn't write, but all these years I've been living for—for—"

He didn't know how to press his advantage, he was too new in love; her rising color, her frown cut his words short.

"You'd better go back to your prison, John Bennett, and to your ranch as soon as you can."

But as he set her hands free he laughed, gayly, triumphantly, and the note of it made her tingle; for this sound had every element of that happiness for which she had been waiting all day.

CHAPTER XIII.

Doctor Brainard was taking a short vacation at his farm some sixty miles "up country."

He loved to put on a flannel shirt and a straw hat and make hay with his men. It was a second crop, the rowan, and he reveled in the sunny August atmosphere and in the peace of his short vacation. He had been living this primitive existence for several days, smoking a pipe or a good cigar at the front porch of the rude farmhouse, and going to bed with the birds. He fetched no medical books up to Home Farm and vegetated and dreamed at his ease in his armchair in his little parlor. He had put *the piano* in the best place in the house. He liked it better up here in the country than he did in Syracuse.

The childless bachelor had done his best for the son of the woman he had faithfully loved all his life. Standing by the open piano, in the last flicker of twilight, he waited now for the young man to arrive. The buggy had gone "over town" to fetch him, for a day or two before John had wired that he wanted to come out and make a visit at the farm.

The doctor's personal reveries had been agreeable, but he didn't follow them on, but gave himself up to thinking about John, whom he hadn't seen for two years, and since John had come suddenly East he had written the doctor only once, to ask him for a considerable loan of money. This was only the other day and John had been East some six weeks.

From where the doctor stood he could see the road wind across the flat country between the harvested fields and caught sight of the buggy, fetching

John from the station, as it first declared itself a speck, and then, growing larger, finally rattled in at the gate and drew up by the barn. The young fellow got out, bigger, more tremendous than ever, and Doctor Brainard, who was a small man, felt overpowered.

"Hello, doc!" The visitor wrung his friend's hand hard. "Gosh, but it's good to smell that hay! And isn't it a bully evening?"

After supper, when he had wandered over the farm, seen the live stock, had the horses he liked best led out and looked over, when the doctor had observed him furtively, looked him over and made a mental note of "decided nervous excitement," taken in his embarrassed nonchalance, his altered ways, his undoubted manhood, the two went together to the parlor, where candles had been put on the open piano and where the servant had placed a mass of sweet peas in a bowl.

"Well," said the doctor pleasantly, "you came East suddenly, didn't you? But you're doing well on the ranch?"

"Pretty well."

"How did you leave things there?"

"Pretty good shape."

The curt sentences did not frighten Doctor Brainard.

"But you didn't think the venture was all that you expected? What was the matter?"

"It isn't the ranch that eats up things. I wanted this advance that I asked you for for myself."

The young man sat on the window ledge, his hands round his knee. His friend remembered the spendthrift gentleman of whom this was the son, and wondered how the boy's father would approach this affair of extravagance.

The doctor cleared his throat. "You know you haven't got an income to stand the strain you're putting on it."

"I'm much obliged for the loan, sir," said John evasively.

"You've been going the pace, I guess." But the doctor smiled so affably as he said the words his hearer accepted them agreeably and returned: "Well, I've been running on pretty well, doctor."

"What is it, my boy. Cards?"

John hesitated. "Oh—little of everything! I've played a lot of bridge, I've bought some horses, and it costs to live."

"It costs *me*," his friend replied, "just four thousand dollars a year to run the farm and my town house; it cost your father thirty to forty thousand, and he died a hundred thousand in debt. I hoped very much that you had set out on a different plan. But not to seem to preach to you, for after all I'm nothing but a friend, *does* this loan clear up things?"

"Not by ten thousand dollars."

And here the young man got up and went out of the room as if to avoid the doctor's exclamation.

He leaned against one of the piazza posts, where the honeysuckle vine wound its green leaves and hung its yellow bugles. As though nothing had broken into their conversation of a few moments since, when Brainard finally came out, John said:

"I've been using my capital right along till now. I haven't got anything left but the ranch."

The older man, who had been mowing with his men in the hayfields and had felt only a delicious weariness, now experienced a sense of burden; a great fatigue crept over him.

John, by the honeysuckle vine, close to the post of the porch, straight and vigorous, did not carry any perceptible burden, for it appeared to have shifted over to the older shoulders, and when the doctor spoke again his voice was keen.

"I suppose that I don't understand the set of people you've been going with. Gamblers filch you at their own tables, that's accepted. But these people whose incomes are limitless let a poor young fellow like you go along with them, share their extravagance——"

John turned sharply: "For God's sake," he exclaimed, "drop it, doctor. They haven't anything to do with my extravagance; it's none of their business what I spend, and if I want to go with them, it's my own affair. Peter

Junior asked me to go on a yachting trip of his as his guest—they had to charter a new boat as theirs is being overhauled—and I insisted on sharing the expenses."

The doctor stared at him, he took his glasses off.

"*My word!*" he exclaimed. "Why, it doesn't cost less than fifteen thousand to run such a yacht for a few months."

"Just about that," said the young man magnificently.

And this time the doctor turned and walked into the house.

The magnificent prodigal, with more or less serenity, smoked by the honeysuckle vine, then went down the path to the kitchen garden and across the fields to the spring house. He had especially loved this corner as a boy. Cool and deep and vocal and delicious, the caressing gurgle over the stones of a shallow brook caught his ear and gave him the same old thrill. With its borders of cress and of spearmint holding it round like a bouquet, the pool settled and made its icy bowl. Across its limited surface John saw the moonlight drift; and while he stood there, the harvest moon, yellow as butter, golden as a metal globe, hung over Home Farm.

John sat down on the grass, the farmhouse, warm and secure, back of him, the pool at his feet. He didn't think at all about the doctor, whom he'd pained and shocked and troubled; to his own tangled affairs he didn't give a second of thought.

Memories of the yachting trip, just over, came hard and fast upon him—heavenly days and nights as beautiful as this—and he kept his recollections company until he realized that he was sitting there alone in the grass, and he sprang up with something like a cry of pain.

He stayed ten days at Home Farm and Doctor Brainard left him to his own devices. Every morning the hired man took the post in and carried with him a bulky letter, written by the young

lover. It had been easy, so fascinating—
ly easy, to cover page after page. In
older days, in colder days, how Ben-
nett envied the power and force that
created those words, how he yearned
for it and with what jealous regret! He
could have written all day long. In-
stead, he took his passion out of doors
and walked with it, its magnificent
sunny presence like an angel at his
side. John was like Tobias walking
hand in hand with the archangel.

He lay under the haystacks and read
and planned, and even began to rhyme
and to make verses. Everything that
made him think of his finances he
thrust away with irritation; he wouldn't
open Furniss' letters, and they lay on
his table with his bills. During the
ten days at Home Farm he never had
one letter from Mrs. Bathurst. But
then, he hadn't dared hope she would
write him; in a few days the whole
Bathurst family would be in Tallahoe
and he was booked to visit there.

The present John Bennett was very
much warped; he was out of line with
part of his nature and in perfect step
with the sentimental part. No young
man in love is ever balanced. The lun-
acy of love and its delirium all belonged
to him now, and there wasn't an ob-
ject on any part of the globe that didn't
revolve under the sun of one woman's
face; everything else was in the dark;
to John there was but one pole, the uni-
verse hung loose from it.

One night as they sat together on
the veranda Brainard asked John:
"What are you going to do?"

The young man turned, his face had
the look of the morning on it; there
wasn't a line of care. As he looked
then, some young god might have
looked just before he went to his mis-
tress.

"Going to run down to New York
to-morrow for a few days; then I guess
I'll go on over to the valley. I'm
asked to stay there in several places."

"I meant what are you going to do
about your business affairs?"

A slight wrinkle came over John's
brow; until he found that he hadn't
another dollar in his pocket he would

go on, still hoping that he might dis-
cover some bunch of unlooked-for
greenbacks in his top drawer.

"Guess I'll have to sell out to Fur-
niss." He serenely accepted his fate.

"The ranch," he continued; "that is,
my share of it, will more than pay up
everything I owe you, Doctor Brainard."

"I dare say. I expect it's a little too
soon to ask you what you've gotten out
of all this sort of thing."

"Gosh!" John tried to meet the mu-
sic. "A fellow has got to live, a man
must see the world."

"Costs a great deal to go around it,"
said the doctor. "There have been men
who thought they have done it in
eighty days. I'm twice your age and
I don't pretend to have seen much
more than Home Farm."

John got up and with a good deal
of dignity for one who had nearly
ruined himself and borrowed money, he
said: "It doesn't make so much differ-
ence what I've got out of it just now,
doctor, does it? I'm only twenty-
five."

"No," returned the older man slowly,
"you can't, of course, weigh every-
thing against money. Do you know
any real nice girl you could marry?"
he added, after a pause.

His ward roared: "Marry! I'm
never going to marry, doctor. I
wouldn't marry the best girl alive."

"I thought not," replied Doctor
Brainard quietly. "But if you'll marry
some good girl within a year, I'll buy
the ranch back, pay your debts, and
start you fresh."

"You're awfully kind," exclaimed
Bennett heartily, "but if that's the alter-
native I guess I'll have to sink or
swim, for I can't meet you. I shall
wire Bob Furniss to-night to sell out
my share of the ranch."

"And with what's left," said Doctor
Brainard, "after you've paid up your
debts, I suppose you'll go round the
world again."

And the young fellow half-heartedly
returned his smile: "I guess that's about
right, doctor!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Virginia Bathurst, in her riding habit, coming from the stables, the dogs at her heels, felt herself not more than "sweet and twenty," and looked it, too, for touched by one of those rare auroras which now and then give to a woman the semblances of a false dawn, her step and her laugh, her gestures of happiness as she played with her dogs, the song she hummed as she went into the house, were all buoyant. She was expecting a visitor and light was lit by the warmest of lamps.

Hesitating whether or not she would go upstairs to dress or stop where she was, she finally decided on the latter course, and went into one of the smaller rooms, where a big fire lighted on the hearth was the only sound likely to disturb her.

She was alone at Bathurst House for the time with Grace Cornwallis, now Mrs. Jack Bathurst, and Grace's baby. Peter, Senior, and his sons were in Saratoga for the races, and the lady of the house had been left to her own devices, wanderings, and ridings; she had gone pretty well over the country. It had been with relief that she had seen them all leave Tallahoe, for she wanted to be alone and to pursue her thoughts away from her husband's eyes. Daily she had reviewed the lands of memory as she had gone over the Tallahoe country, where now and then she would bring her horse up short at a perilous jump; so she would bring her thoughts up short at the one perilous place. She knew how great the danger was there, though sometimes she would deny it and ride straight and free; then again she would confess that it was fatal danger, and if she should go on would mean some kind of death.

She knew that she loved John Bennett, boy as he was, young as he was, and that her defrauded heart, which had experienced many disappointments, found in this man's love and being, solace and beauty.

She accepted the fact as it was, she acknowledged it frankly, and she was great in the way she faced it; but until

this afternoon here at Tallahoe, when he was coming back to her, she had not been quite able to decide what she was going to do with him.

His adoration and passion, the security in the fact that he had never and probably would never love again as he did now, gave her strength to be mistress of herself. She felt there wasn't any hurry about the climax, if there was to be one, and she knew that with her experience she held him and that it was for her to do what she liked—she knew that he was hers.

She had forbidden him to speak to her of love; she had told him that the day he disobeyed her she would never see him again, laughing in her heart at his white face and his obedience, conscious how unable she would be to keep that threat. But poor John took her at her word and accepted the silence she forced, only because he believed her and wanted above all other things to be near to her.

He had attached himself in Newport to the worldly skirts of their set and, as poor Doctor Brainard had known, followed like a pauper prince at the pace beyond his means.

He had seen really little of the woman for whom he was wasting his youth until he went away with them all on the yachting trip. Peter Bathurst, Senior, *hors de combat* from the very first day, confined himself with his cocktails to his own quarters, and John Bennett had had the field for his own. During those summer days when the warm waters curled like azure under the keel, when sky and clouds seemed made of witchcraft, and the boat in which they sailed to be a ship of dreams, the young man had, by Virginia's side, read to her, watched the reflections in her eyes, basked under the tranquil beauty of her face, sunned himself in the sun of her, and longed to spend his whole existence in one kiss on her lips which seemed to him to be the most perfect way in which he could offer her his soul.

But even in the nights when they sat side by side on the deck, under the planets that swam above them in

the heavens, she never so much as drew him to touch her, and John grew to worship her as well as to love her, and she became as sacred to him as she was desired. His case was hopeless, and for his emotion and his ecstasy there was only one possible cure.

John, coming in in the evening, found the house deserted. There was no one in the library before the fire where Virginia had been waiting for him; she had left before his trap drove up to the door. There was no one to make him welcome, and from the servants who took his luggage and showed him his room—his own old room—he learned that the family were away for the most part and no one but Mrs. Jack and Mrs. Peter, Senior, at home.

As far as John was concerned this news in itself did very well for a greeting, and he needed all the time there was before dinner in which to accustom himself to the knowledge that he was to be practically alone with his hostess here. His fortnight in the country had made him restless instead of quieting him, and his heart was all in a tumult, his whole nature like the summer land around him, ripe, mature, ready for the harvest.

How had he ever lived through two years without seeing her again? Why, he had once held her in his arms in this very room, and after such a madness she let him now come back again—here—she let him come back and find her here alone! She had never blamed him, never referred to that madness; and as John thought this he rejoiced.

He dressed leisurely for dinner, and he was too young, too sincere, not to take pride in his looks, not to be glad that he was tall and strong. He tied his cravat, put his hair in order, and stood for a moment, his hand on the door which two years before he had opened for Mrs. Bathurst with such mingled emotions. But as he went downstairs his spirits left him, for he realized that when he looked this night at her it would be with the knowledge back of them both of everything

he had written and said. He wondered how she would welcome him, what she would say. And if he should, by any chance, find her alone.

John found three women before the fire in the big hall and several men, whom he remembered for old cronies. Mrs. Bathurst gave the guest her hand limply—she scarcely touched his, she scarcely spoke to him, she didn't look at him, and his life went out of him at her soulless welcome. She sent him in to dinner with some one whom in his excitement he actually could not see—he went in with a girl who had to speak to him twice before John, lifting up his blue eyes, slowly recognized her to be an old friend.

He had been sent in to dinner with a marvelously good-looking young creature, all fire and sparkle, tall and bright-lipped. She turned, laughing, to John Bennett.

"How perfectly killing of you not to know me!"

"But you didn't know me at first, did you?" he asked.

"Naturally not! Bennett isn't an uncommon name! I didn't think of you, and when you came in I almost roared."

John's hard white face relaxed a little, his brow cleared. "I don't really know you now," he confessed, "but I used to know you very well; indeed, I called you by your first name."

"Yes, Johnny," she nodded, laughing, "perhaps you did, but you needn't call me by my first name now. I am prouder than I used to be. And—shall I tell you something?"

"Yes, do," he urged.

She leaned slightly toward him, smiling with amusement, her eyes blue as Irish lakes, and she whispered with a pretty combination of grace and coquetry: "Well, your hair isn't *really* red, you know!"

Bennett smiled and then he began to laugh. "Why, *that's* what we quarreled over. You called me redhead and I was perfectly furious at you."

Gazing at the hair in question, his companion said: "I should say it was more pink than red, but it's a lovely

color, and you have grown crosser looking and more bad-humored than ever."

John talked to her through dinner and overdid it. She acted to him as a stimulant after a hard race; he made himself charming, devoted himself to her, and found a piquancy in the situation; he liked to have Milly Haven call him down and tease him. His vivid recollections of her had an agreeable little sting in every one of them, for he had loved her madly in his boyhood and she had turned out to be "a rippling girl."

John during dinner did not look once toward his hostess, and Mrs. Jack watched his politeness to Milly Haven with relief, for Grace knew of his devotion to Virginia, and was worried about it. Virginia Bathurst watched him, too. As they came out together the lady said:

"So you and Mr. Bennett are old friends, Miss Haven?"

"Heavens, yes!" cried the girl. "Why, he was in love with me when I was in short frocks, and we've been talking about it. He was awfully amusing, and he ran up all sorts of ridiculous debts buying me flowers and getting himself a dress suit."

She linked her arm in Mrs. Bathurst's and looked back over her lovely young shoulder, white as a snowbank, toward the room where the men lingered with their cigars.

"Hasn't he turned out well?" she said warmly. "Isn't he nice to look at?"

And after her hostess' murmured response she defended herself, laughing: "Oh, I don't doubt he's a heartbreaker, but I'm not smitten with him. I used to think it the greatest fun in the world to tease him to death, and I expect I should think so now."

Milly Haven spoke nonchalantly with the assurance that beauty and youth give. She turned away and settled her mass of dark hair before an old mirror, flanked by candlelights. She moved well, with dignity and grace; her hair had no lights in it, nothing but the shades of night.

"Grace," she exclaimed, "listen—isn't that your baby?"

"Yes," said the mother, rising. "He's a naughty thing to-night, he won't sleep."

"Oh, let me," Milly Haven exclaimed. "Let me run up to him, Grace. You know I adore Jackit."

As she went upstairs without waiting for permission, Grace said to her mother-in-law: "Isn't she stunning, Virginia? Did you notice her at dinner with John?"

"Charming, charming."

"Oh, they're *too* beautiful together," murmured the young married woman rapturously, "made for each other. I knew they'd hit it off, it's been a pet dream of mine. Oh, dear, I hope it won't fall through!"

Mrs. Bathurst went to the fire and put her foot up on the edge of the fire dog, lifting her dress a little above her satin shoe. She leaned on the mantelpiece and stared down at the flames. She had chosen, after careful thought, a frock brown as an autumn leaf, and around her waist a long scarf fell, its ends hung with little gleaming crystals. They fell into the monotone folds of the chiffon in her dress like bits of ice on a brown forest stream. She had dressed with care; she was very pale and her pearls, which she had chosen to wear alone as ornament, added to her pallor.

Grace, as she stood by her side, thought she had never seen Virginia so lovely or so sad.

"You've no bad news, have you?"

"Why do you ask? No."

"You seem a bit tired."

"I rode twenty miles and the horse has a hard mouth."

The two women turned at a sound on the stairway; Milly Haven had come down again, with Grace's child in her arms. He was in his nightdress and he nestled against her.

"Don't fetch him any farther, Milly," called his mother, "he'll take cold. What a perfect goose you are! Take him back!"

Here the men came out of the dining room. Milly Haven remained where

she was, laughing and holding the child under the light of the first turn on the stairs.

John looked up and saw her. There was a sudden maturity in her beauty, a pretty maternity in the picture. Reluctantly, as though it were against his will, he walked slowly over to where she stood. He put his hand out to the little boy.

"Hello, Jackit," he said. "What's the row with you? He's a jolly little kid, isn't he?"

"He's a darling little dear," said the girl warmly, kissing him.

"Milly," cried the mother, "please, please take him back to the nurse."

And the girl obeyed, making the baby shake an affable good night to the company; then she went laughing upstairs with her pretty burden.

John Bennett watched her, waiting until she had turned out of sight, then he slowly traversed the room to the fireplace.

Sitting there among the guests, with Mrs. Jack and Mrs. Peter, Senior, and Donald Dashwood, and the others—not with Milly Haven, for she didn't come back and he didn't miss her or know of her absence—John passed the most wretched evening of his life. He could see his hostess; he addressed some confused words to her that were briefly answered, but it was their only communion. He watched her pale pure cheek and he felt that she was cold and dead to him—voiceless, soundless as a bell which has been broken in the mould. The poor fellow tried vainly to think what it might mean and finally made up his mind that she was angry at his letters and that she had let him come to tell him so, to put him definitely in his place, and for just this reason she had let him come here when she would be alone and could tell him his fate.

Mrs. Bathurst never stirred from her quiet, indolent indifference throughout the evening, and even the others found her unresponsive and left early. Grace lingered as though she did not wish to leave the two alone together, but finally she went upstairs, and then

John drew his breath in so that it came cold around his heart and seemed to hold it like a vise; like a man thrown into a whirlpool and bidden to swim for his life, he heard the waters thunder in his ears and his lips tasted salt as if the spray had touched them.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Bathurst sat immovable in her deep chair. The firelight shone round her. She swung one small foot in its satin shoe, to and fro, to and fro; it marked the boy's hour for him like a living pendulum.

John waited until every sound had died away, then he came over and sat down by Mrs. Bathurst in the chair close at her side. No fewer than a hundred first words had been forming in his mind, but he simply sat and looked at her silently, so long that she finally turned her head and the pallor of her face was swept to scarlet.

"Well," she said, evenly, however, "does it seem like old times here?" She tried to smile at him, bit her lip, and stopped.

"I meant," said Bennett, striving with his thick voice to articulate clearly, "I meant every word that I wrote you in those letters, every single word."

And Mrs. Bathurst said: "I've kept those letters, every one."

"Oh—"

"I'll give them back to you, you may use them all again; they're far too good to waste, John."

She struggled again with herself and said with his hardening face to help her: "I mean to say when you make love to a nice girl, some girl whom you can marry, you can copy these letters out to her—you might even send them as they are; some of them have no beginning or end." She laughed gently and put out one of her lovely hands. "My dear boy, don't look so savage, please!"

The waters that had surged around him began to die down, the spray on his lips was turning to a burning fire.

"Is this the way women do?" he murmured. "Is this the way? Is it the

way you do to Pyrnne and others? No, no," he interrupted himself, "no, you don't mean it, you're only angry at me for something, I can't guess what. I know I was mad to go on as I did, but I couldn't help it; you forbade me to speak and I had to write. I was afraid that you'd send them all back to me, but you didn't." And here the tension snapped for a moment and he broke forth: "It's no crime to love you, is it?"

The words freed him, as though four letters were the wand to knock off his chains. He had both her hands; struggled as she would, she couldn't get them away. But she kept up, she kept up.

He repeated: "It's no crime just to love you, is it? Oh, do you *hear* me?" And not knowing any words more eloquent twenty times he told her that he loved her.

If he only might then have possessed the penetration to see behind her quiet face, to have known for one second the perfect mate she was for him.

"Will you let my hands go, John? Will you let them go? There! Will you get up, John?"

They both rose.

"Good night, good night. You promised not to do this, you know—you've gone back on your word; you are very, very foolish, and very young. You won't listen to me—"

Bennett said something under his breath and came close to her, fixing his darkened eyes on her face.

"I *will* listen," he murmured, "I want to listen, and I want to hear you say just one thing."

"I will never say it, John, never." She had used the words she now used before: "Foolish boy, foolish boy! My poor John!"

"For God's sake," he cried, "don't use those words. It isn't possible that you don't care for me, it isn't *possible*."

Then, as he saw she was going to make him an answer, he put out his hand desperately: "Don't tell me; don't!" And he turned his face away, and if he had not done so then he would have seen her as she was, for her mask fell at the sight of his emotion.

"You'll get over this, John. You will forget it all."

"Hush!" he said fiercely. "I want to die with it!"

And she laughed softly, but not without tenderness.

"Nonsense! Don't think of death—your life is all before you, remember the picture we've both just seen on the stairs."

But before she could finish John caught her hand again brutally.

"I don't know why you treat me so, why you make fun of me and laugh at me. I'm a man and my life is all yours, all yours! Oh," he breathed, drinking in her face with his ardent eyes, "*how* I love you! Don't you *want* it, don't you *want* me?"

She said to herself under her breath: "This can't last forever—just a minute more—just a little more." And at bay before him she made one final try. "What are you asking me for?" She put it to him, controlling her voice and her eyes.

And he stammered, made a desperate gesture, and whispered close to her: "I love you, you know that; I love you. When I was a boy you came then—you were kind—and ever since then I've looked to you, to you—for all."

Trying again, trying again and winning, smiling on him defiantly with the old dear smile, having herself well in hand and daring to do so, she put her hands against his broad chest, both her hands, and met his eyes with her own.

"John," she said softly. "John, I remember that time, too. Trust me, go on trusting me. It's all right, go on looking to me."

And he stammered: "You mean? You mean?"

"I mean that you must go upstairs to your room, please. I ask you to go."

But brought out of the dazzling passion in which he had nearly lost his reason, by her serenity and her quiet, he said more calmly:

"Not until you promise me, not until you promise me."

Seeing that he was not to be withstood, knowing that her own powers

of resistance were at their end, she cried desperately: "Promise you what? What do you want?"

And once again he whispered: "All."

And it was perfectly useless for her to hold out her hand to keep him back, quite useless; he had taken her again in his arms, and he never forgot throughout his life the wonder of it, the marvel of it. For this time was unlike the other time, this time she knew, and she was looking at him with a light in her eyes, even as he kissed her lids down.

"I—want you," he stammered. "I want you, Virginia." He dared to call her name, to breathe it, as he had called it in his dreams.

When she found her breath she whispered: "There's some one on the stairs. I hear them. Will you set me free?"

And once again, without any fear of detection, he said: "Not until you promise me."

And she assented: "I promise you, I promise you. Let me go."

John, still holding her, demanded again: "All?"

She repeated the word to him: "All."

"Mrs. Bathurst, Mrs. Bathurst—" called Milly Haven's cautious voice. She was too wise a woman to come suddenly upon a tête-à-tête. Milly appeared upon the landing, slowly coming down.

"Mrs. Bathurst, are you there? Won't you come up? Grace's little boy isn't well."

Pausing on the last step, Milly looked into the shadow of the room, where the lamplight and the firelight were insufficient illumination. Virginia went quickly over to her.

"Come up, will you? Jackit's very feverish. And, Johnny," she called easily and a little impudently over to the young man who had not moved from his place before the fire, "Johnny Bennett, won't you telephone to the doctor? Doctor Shepherd, at the Big Tree Inn? That's right, isn't it, Mrs. Bathurst?"

John Bennett, at noon the next day,

was aware of an infernal pounding on his door.

"John, John"—he recognized the voice as Grace's—"do get up; it's nearly noon and we want to know when to order the horses."

Bennett jumped out of bed and cautiously opened his door a bit. "Hello, what's the row? What does anybody want to do?"

"Why, don't you want to ride before luncheon?"

"Love it. What are the rest going to do?"

"All right," Grace answered. "I'll telephone the stables, and do hurry, John." He was left to close the door and dress.

In an hour he came down in his riding breeches, booted, big, and good to look at, pale albeit, and he felt that his old life lay behind him like a garment he would never have a use for any more. He came down into the glorious morning with a new world for his own, so he thought, inhabited by one woman and himself, and that woman was to be his.

Two horses were waiting outside at the steps, and John thought with a bounding heart of the woman who was to be his companion.

He heard a step in the hall within and his heart stopped beating. He would help her onto her horse and they would ride away together, and would there be any place far enough away, any wood deep enough, any wonderful, golden, yellow, mellow autumn wood sweet enough for him to ride into with her?

The lady in her riding habit had fairly come up to his side before he saw that it was not Mrs. Bathurst.

"Are you ready?" Milly Haven asked. "Come, then—it's nearly one o'clock and we can ride only an hour. Isn't it a glorious day?"

Milly wasn't a giggling girl, she didn't even smile very much, she was mature for her years. She had a fine, well-moulded figure, she rode straight, her brown habit suited her tint and her color perfectly. She tranquilly drew on her gloves.

"Grace says I may ride the horse you sent on from the West for Mr. Bathurst. Isn't she a pretty creature? Are you ready?"

John Bennett followed her in silence; he had not even bidden her good morning.

He lagged behind his companion and the groom helped Miss Haven to mount.

Miss Haven took her time, settled herself comfortably, looked gay and debonair and happy, and seemed to have no idea that she was playing horribly out of rôle.

As Bennett flung his leg over his horse he said: "Anybody else riding?"

"No one else," responded his companion. "Grace is not feeling well this morning, and I guess Mrs. Bathurst must be at Albany by this."

"Albany!" he repeated.

"Why, yes, that's the route for Saratoga, isn't it?"

And at his blank staring she exclaimed:

"Why, evidently you don't know. Didn't anybody tell you? Mrs. Bathurst left at eight this morning for Saratoga. Mr. Bathurst telephoned her to go on for the steeplechase, and of course when a woman's married—I suppose she has to obey."

CHAPTER XVI.

As soon as Bennett could decently leave he went to Saratoga, and the first person he saw after leaving his train was Peter Bathurst, Senior, in the bar of the United States Hotel. The gentleman was being piloted away by a bookmaker evading the new law by the help of his worthy friends. Bathurst was not so intoxicated as not to recognize his son's college friend, and held out his hand affably.

"Benny, Benny," he gasped, "my dear old frien', John Benny. Got any money? Here's Van Cortlandt, he'll take care of it for you, old fell. Come in, see us; come see m'wife."

John got away from him, cursing his existence. "She bound to this

beast," he thought, "tied to this sot!" He couldn't bear the sight of Bathurst.

The next person to cross his path was Nicholas Pyrne. The honorable gentleman wore a smart costume in the height of summer fashion and sported a flower in his buttonhole; extremely fit and debonair, he came brightly along the piazza of the United States Hotel, the very picture of good spirits and cheer.

"Hello, Bennett!" he exclaimed heartily. "Where did you drop from? Haven't seen you for an age. You've left the West, then? The Bathursts are all here, do you know?"

"Yes, I've just seen the governor. I'm looking for Jack and Peter."

"Why, the whole lot of them are out at the De Pusters for lunch. You'll come along, too, won't you? I'll be responsible for your welcome. The De Pusters keep open house."

"No, no," Bennett refused. "I'll run in to see them when they come back later."

"Not married yet?" Nicholas asked as they walked along together. "That pretty little Miss Forsyth. You know, of course, and Peter—"

"Yes," Bennett nodded.

When Pyrne finally left John a terrible misgiving suddenly came over him: The sight of Pyrne, the sight of Mr. Bathurst, and the atmosphere of Saratoga, its garish, blatant ugliness, the smell, the temper of the place, assumed a sudden gross reality, and he felt as though he were beginning to waken out of a long, long dream.

He wrote a passionate appeal to Mrs. Bathurst and sent it with quantities of flowers to where she was stopping.

When she received the gifts Virginia held the letter to her lips—she wore it for days in her bosom, but John couldn't know that. She put his flowers away and kept them until they were ghosts and dried, until they fell apart like dust, but he never knew these things.

At tea time, having received no sign, John went in to find her with visitors before the tea. She had changed wonderfully and her face was so altered

that it made him sick to see the transformation. Virginia Bathurst's youth was gone, her contours had sharpened, and to any one but a man in idolatrous love, she would have seemed less beautiful and much aged.

Nicholas Pyrnne, as well as several other men, was with her, and John discovered that Jack had gone back to Tallahoe to his wife and child, and that Peter, Junior, had also gone back, and no one vouchsafed any information about Mr. Bathurst, Senior.

The lady welcomed John Bennett as though he were her boys' friend; she said how sorry she was that they had both gone, and what a pity it was that John hadn't known it. She talked to Pyrnne as she used to do in the valley, before John Bennett had told her how he loved her, before he had held her in his arms and kissed her—kissed her. He said these things over to himself defiantly as he sat there staring at her, and he bore her cruelty with bitter indignation. "She's a cruel, cruel coquette," he raged within himself; "she's a wicked, wicked woman." And then he contradicted and affirmed that she was broken-hearted and suffering, that she was so good, so heavenly good that she was reproaching herself, and his wild chivalry provided him with the needed courage to speak to her. She hardly answered him.

"She's angry with me; I've offended her," he thought miserably. And on this he built his hopes, settling back in his chair and doggedly determining to outstay every man of them.

She tolerated his presence, scarcely speaking to him, ignoring him as though he had been a mere boy, awkwardly lingering on, unbidden, endured.

At length, the others took leave, but John didn't budge. Pyrnne rose the last and looked over at him.

"Which way are you going, Bennett?"

The young man's voice was hoarse as he answered:

"Why, I'm not going anywhere right now, Pyrnne. I'm going to stop here another few moments."

But Mrs. Bathurst interrupted:

"I'm going out to dine with Mr. Pyrnne. We might all go down together. Won't you wait, Nicholas, until I fetch my hat and gloves, and we'll run along?" And when she returned to the drawing-room after quite a long time, Pyrnne had mercifully left the room and the lover was in it alone. He stood there white as death; his patent misery and his despair and anger challenged her.

"What have I done, what have I done, that you should treat me so?" he broke forth. "Do you want me to kill myself?"

At these words she seemed startled at first, but said quite calmly and with much sternness: "It's impossible to even see you, you make it impossible. I want you to go to-night from Saratoga, not to try to see me any more. You don't want to force me to—" She stopped here, although her voice was perfectly in control.

"Why, you forget," he cried wildly, "you forget!" His cheeks crimsoned, the tears sprang to his eyes.

"I shall never forget that I have liked you very much, and I hope you won't make me do so. Please, please do as—"

She drew her hands away from him, and he stammered: "You promised, you promised," and caught her hands again in spite of her defense and crushed them.

"You don't love me then?" he cried to her desperately. "You don't love me?"

Passion and youth blinded him, he saw neither pity nor kindness in her face.

"Tell me, answer me, don't you, don't you care?"

"Why, of course not, in the way you mean," she said, with effort. "How absurd! Come, John, do have common sense."

Cruelty was the best thing she knew how to use; she stood like a surgeon with the knife.

Then Bennett gave a wild cry and flung her hands away as though they had been objects of a despised spoil and he didn't want them any more.

Then he laughed like a crazy man and caught her to him violently, and kissed her until she cried out for mercy against his burning lips.

"There!" he panted. "There! No matter what you say, you're mine. No man has ever kissed you more!"

She met his tears with his kisses on her lips. He tried, sobbing, to speak again, then turned violently and flung himself out of the room.

When Nicholas Pyrnce came back his friend was not in the room, and he was obliged to sit there waiting for her quite an hour before she appeared again. He was always waiting patiently for her and he didn't mind, he expected to have to do so, without ever participating in any great event; and when Mrs. Bathurst returned he observed that she had changed her dress. No one ever saw her wear the gown she had taken off that afternoon again. Looking at her keenly, Pyrnce said: "What in Heaven's name did you do to that poor Bennett boy?"

"You passed him on the stairs?"

"Passed him—he nearly knocked me down!"

Mrs. Bathurst walked over to the window and drew on her gloves. Pyrnce had ordered a careful dinner for her. He knew that she would be pleased with his menu, he was happier than he had ever been in his life, for not three days before she had telegraphed him to meet her at Albany, and they had come up here on the train together to join Peter Bathurst, Senior. After two years she had sent for Nicholas to come to her and he had quietly obeyed without one word or remark or reminder, without one demand. He was profoundly happy.

After a few seconds she turned away from the window to him and said: "I can't go out to dinner to-night, Nicholas."

"Really! Are you ill?"

"I'm *enervée*. I've just had a terrible scene with John Bennett. He's in trouble and he came to confide in me."

"Oh," accepted her companion, his nice eyes not changing their expression,

"poor chap, I'm sorry, but don't let it knock you all up."

"But it has," said the woman, with an effort, "and I shan't go out. It's given me a headache."

And Pyrnce expostulated: "Don't spoil our fun because the third person is out of sorts, Virginia. It shall be, however, just as you say, my dear; but I think a little air and music and a cocktail will set you up. I don't want you to stop here and brood about this boy. It's far better to come with me as we planned."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I do," he answered decidedly.

She hesitated, she didn't want to spoil his pleasure, she didn't want to make another inch of misery or even cast another cloud. She took up her gloves, which she had drawn off again.

"Very well, then—come—let us go."

"Splendid!" he cried, beaming with the pleasure her concession gave him. "You're the right sort." He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it. He didn't ask her anything about Bennett's trouble, he didn't think he needed to ask. He had no jealousy as he thought of him, only a kindly comprehensive pity for any man who loved this dear woman in vain. He never even dreamed that she cared for John.

A little later, leaning across the table to her, a vision of the young chap's face as he had seen it on the stairs recurring to him, he said:

"I wish I could be of some service to Bennett, Virginia."

And with a singular smile, Mrs. Bathurst said: "Perhaps you can be."

CHAPTER XVII.

When the first cold of November had stung and passed, when the middle of the month had bitten through the country and found the very heart of the earth to freeze it hard, when throughout the land certain fragrant torches had been lit and the State smelled of fire and pine, the golden deceptive haze of an unexpected mid-summer day fell over the country like

a veil, and there came a softness upon the wintry air as delusive as the promises of a woman which she never means to keep.

Doctor Brainard sat in his office expediting his last patient; he was eager to get out for a certain drive which he had planned to take.

The last patient had scarcely closed the front door behind him, carrying away with him his complaints and his groans and his prescriptions, when the door from the hallway opened into Doctor Brainard's office and another visitor came in.

"My word, John," said the doctor, his hands outstretched, "I can't believe my eyes!"

He had not seen his ward or heard one line from him since the young man had left him in the summer.

"You're an ungrateful chap." The doctor paused and followed up: "In Heaven's name, John, I believe you've come to see me professionally. Haven't you, my son?"

He called him this and looked at him over his glasses. Many years before the Bennett boy had stood where he was standing now, twisting between his hands his school cap, and, nervous, awkward, and proud, he had said that rather than be sent to school by a woman he would work in a store.

Doctor Brainard at that time hadn't thought twice about the child, but he had learned to love him dearly in the intervening years, probably more than he knew, and he had grown still nearer to him during these past months, when John had left him in utter ignorance of his whereabouts, and while the doctor from a distance watched him and followed him as well as he could, yearning but not daring to make a sign.

Bennett flung his overcoat and hat on a chair; he looked thirty years old, his first youth was forever gone, his face bore the marks of things which it cut the doctor to the heart to see and recognize.

"This isn't the first time you've been away from Syracuse, but it's the first time you've come back like this, John," the doctor went on. "But you have

come back, and as far as that goes, I take it as a good sign."

Between his teeth the young man said rather brutally: "Don't preach to me."

With undisturbed good humor his friend answered:

"Why, I haven't even the right to your confidence."

And the other exclaimed: "Gosh, my confidence! I guess nobody would care to hear that, and as far as that goes, you're the only person in the world that cares a hang whether I live or die or go to hell! I've been a cub to bother you, and you've always been a brick, Doctor Brainard. I haven't any confidences or any excuses." His pale face with its scars spoke more eloquently than his words to the older man. "But I've been through hell, all right," John said, and added more naturally: "It doesn't seem to have burned me up quite, though I wish it had!"

"When you were up at the farm, John, I knew then just where you were and what you were going through, but a man can't force a friend's confidence." He very delicately put himself on a plane with the younger man, as though they had been of an age. "I would have gladly helped you, but I don't think any one ever helps another much—in such things, at any rate. Certain states only wear themselves out."

And after a few moments, he said again: "When they take hold of a big, fine fellow such as you are, and drag him down, then they're cursed—otherwise——"

The other began to frown, but Brainard had been clever enough to stop.

"Otherwise," John asked. "What—then?"

"Sometimes they are capable of going with him into every season, of filling his barns and his storehouses until the grain's all in."

Bennett had never thought of Doctor Brainard as being young, as being anything but a frumpy old country doctor, and an old trump, a brick; as a man of sentiment, why, the very odors of anodynes and medicines in the gloomy old James Street house put romance away.

After quite an interval John spoke, and said: "Doctor, you seem to know a lot about me."

"I know all the valley knows," said his friend. "I know the common talk."

The young man frowned desperately; anger and rebellion, shame and humiliation had struggled with him for a long time, and he had given his confidences to no one.

"My life is spoiled at the start of it," he said passionately, "and I don't want to pull it together. I don't care a damn what becomes of me now. I haven't got a cent in the world; I've tasted the lowest things of life to forget; and don't you talk about gathering in of the grain to me, or of anything but a woman's cursed influence on a man. There's never going to be any decent harvest for me, Doctor Brainard; I've died young."

The doctor found there was no place for humor or even for philosophy in his own mind as he sat so close to real anguish; though the man was young, what difference did that make? There was great affection in his voice as he asked:

"Why did you come back here, John?"

"I don't know; habit, I guess, much as anything. I suppose underlying it all there's some magnet in it, some humiliating flea that I may catch sight of her again."

Bennett went to bed in his old room and heard the trolley run till dawn along the familiar street. The following morning he opened the *Syracuse Times* in bed. It was noon, he had slept long, and no one had disturbed him; the maid brought him his coffee and the papers when he at length rung his bell.

The *Times* fell from his hands. He sat there motionless, staring white and red, white and red, then he read the paragraph again.

Toward two o'clock Doctor Brainard came at length out of his cage, as John used to call it, and found his visitor marching up and down like a wild man, waiting for him, and Bennett took the doctor's arm.

"Did you read, did you see it in the *Times*? Did you know?"

The doctor nodded. "Mr. Bathurst's been ill for two months. I was called in consultation there before you came."

"Why in thunder didn't you tell me so, yesterday?"

The doctor made no reply.

Bennett, without noticing it, said: "Don't you see, don't you understand? She's free, she's free!"

"Have you had your coffee yet?" asked the doctor.

John resumed his walk up and down the drawing-room at large. When could he go to her, when could he see her? She was here, then, in Syracuse; he hadn't really known it, but he had heard she had gone abroad. He had tried not to hear, not to know, to be ignorant, to blot her out of existence for himself. He flung out his hands with a violent gesture, and exclaimed: "And I haven't got a cent in the world!"

Doctor Brainard stood sturdy before the mantel. He looked practical and commonplace and business-like, a little dried up, far from being a lover; he gazed thoughtfully at the young fellow launched so far on his sea of trouble, launched so far on that wonderful sea whose waters, because of death and fate, had been calmed for him many years. He didn't know whether he envied John or not, but he loved him.

"The woman's old enough to be his mother," he said to himself. "She's a brilliant, worldly creature; she's had a lot of admiration, and she'll have a lot more now. Why, there isn't the ghost of a chance for him. Still, women have been fools, fools before."

Doctor Brainard looked at the lover, this wreck of boyhood; its very destruction would touch her, and she would know what he had been through for her. "Confound her," he said to himself, "but I'm going to risk it."

"Will you be quiet a second and stop walking up and down? I told you that when you found a good girl who would marry you I'd buy the ranch back and all that would start you fresh. Mrs. Bathurst, as a widow, is not in the

conditions—still, that's your affair and hers. If you want to ask her to marry you, you can tell her that you own the ranch, and that you will be my heir. She's rich and probably won't care, but you're not a beggar."

John stared at him, and at the human kindness, at the benign sympathy, his own natural expression came back to his face. He grasped his friend's hand.

"You're a wonder, Doctor Brainard, a wonder!"

When could he go, when would it be decent to go? Not for weeks, not for months. Where would she be then? Would she leave? Well, he would follow her.

The real greatness of his really great love carried him through the next few days so far apart from the common herd, that Brainard wondered, was much impressed by him, and as he watched John was transfigured back into his own youth and to his own misery, and John grew dearer to him every day.

Brainard saw that he had no need to tell his ward to give himself time and to give her time. A fortnight passed, and John never stirred from the house; he hardly slept or ate, but he didn't drink.

By the increased restlessness Doctor Brainard saw, in a few days, that John's limit had been reached; that he couldn't bear it much longer; the conventional wait of months was not to be expected of the lover. The family in general had gone to Tallahoe directly after the funeral, but the affairs of the estate had called for Mrs. Bathurst's presence, and both the doctor and his ward knew that she was back in town for a few days.

One afternoon, before starting on his rounds, the doctor, from his window, saw John come out of the house, stand for a moment on the step looking up the street in a certain direction. He appeared taller than ever, mature, his face white and grave, and he had the air of departure upon him, the air of a man starting out on a long journey. Doctor Brainard couldn't watch him; he

turned away, he was as nervous and excited as though he were himself in question.

On his own account, he was caring for a very important case, and it kept him out late, past the dinner hour. When he came in, learning that his guest was in the house, he went to the young man's room. An electric light from the street showed him the bowed figure in the window. As the doctor came in John got up and was the first to speak, in a voice all roughened at the edges, a voice almost like a boy's, so naive it was in grief.

"Do you think I could get away anywhere?"

"To be sure. Want to go—abroad?"

"Yes."

Brainard mentally calculated.

"This is Monday—how would Saturday's boat do?"

"There's Wednesday's boat," John suggested.

"All right, my boy."

In the extremely vague light Doctor Brainard saw the blond head bend a little. Not a word of consolation came to his mind, he didn't try for any, knowing that in the war between words and feelings, words went to the wall.

"I'll go to the bank the first thing in the morning and fix you up a letter of credit." He waited a second, then said: "I'll fix it up for a year's expenses."

The young man heard this through his misery. "I'll make it all right, doctor, some day, if I—if I——"

"Come," said the doctor, "come, John, buck up, my boy."

John returned to his place by the window and sat down again, thinking, his head on his arms.

"I'll go and tell Nelly to pack your things and your trunk."

The doctor stood there a moment in the half darkness, looking with compassion upon the bowed figure of the son of the woman he loved. It brought his own grief back again. And he mentally called up with distinctness the figure of Mary Poole as he turned away and went out, shutting the door behind him. And to the Bennett boy,

as he sat there, sorrowing more pitifully than he had ever sorrowed over the loss of his home and his personal things, there came the figure of a woman now to stand behind him and to lay her shadowy fingers on his hair—it wasn't the same woman's figure which had come upon his childish misery in the old hall room; it was a different woman, and unconscious of her ghostly presence, as one whom his mother comforted, John leaned against her shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the autumn of the year following, Doctor Brainard, dozing on the porch, under the honeysuckle vines at Home Farm, as he awakened with a consciousness that his delicious nap had been spoiled, heard a clear voice calling from the roadway to his hired man: "Do you know whether Mr. Bennett has come yet? But I thought he was to arrive to-day?"

The doctor stirred and got up and went down toward the stable, and the visit thereafter was always connected in his mind with the smell of honeysuckle and with the stirring of the southwest wind in the brilliant maple leaves.

"Oh, how d'do, Doctor Brainard."

A smart dogcart had drawn up by the stable door, there were an English groom in the back and two ladies in the front. Doctor Brainard recognized the trap as belonging to Mrs. Nicholas Pyrnne and he greeted her cordially, but the young lady on her left was a stranger to him. She was a much younger woman than the owner of the dogcart; she was dark and graceful, and sat up well beside Mrs. Nicholas Pyrnne; she had a sparkling way with her, and as she closed her parasol and held it, leaning on it with her white-gloved hands, she looked pleasantly at the gentleman from eyes as blue as Irish lakes.

"This is Doctor Brainard," she nodded, for she seemed to know him. "I've heard a lot about you from a mutual friend." She gave him her hand with

a very attractive smile. "We thought—I thought that Mr. Bennett would be here by this. When he left us yesterday at the steamer he said he was coming directly to you, so I've driven over to ask him if he won't drive to-morrow."

The younger lady entirely monopolized the conversation in her clear, bright voice. There was no pronoun in it but the first person singular. Her companion, who had also shaken hands with Doctor Brainard, was completely out of the moment's interest, apparently, and fixed her eyes upon the level sweep of the autumn fields.

When Mrs. Pyrnne had introduced Miss Haven to the doctor he said: "Oh, of course," and remembered that he knew the name from John's letters very well indeed.

"We are going to be neighbors, Doctor Brainard," Miss Haven informed him, "for my father has taken the Point Dexter place for a year."

"Ah, yes," nodded the gentleman, "that will be perfectly delightful, it's a fine old property. John will be home to-night."

After Mrs. Pyrnne had exchanged a few words with the doctor and said how very sorry she was not to see John Bennett—she was going to Newport that night—the younger lady still looked and leaned out of the dogcart, interested in the low house with its vines, where, through one open window, she could see the open piano, with its bunch of sweet peas, and she looked past the house and the garden and over the slope.

"Is that the spring house, Doctor Brainard?" she asked. "And is that the brook down there?"

"Bless my soul, yes! Do you know Home Farm?"

She seemed to know it intimately to judge by her expression, which almost said to him: "Dear me, how stupid you are! Don't you know it has become to me a sort of sentimental playground already?"

Doctor Brainard said to himself: "My word, I bet they're engaged!"

When the smart trap with the two

smart ladies had finally driven away, he walked down to the gate and there leaned waiting for John. He opened the gate shortly after to let the buggy pass out when it went to the station to fetch the homecomer.

Then Brainard clicked the gate to and leaned there, looking toward the town where, not more than three miles away, the Point Dexter place had been let to the Havens.

"They're not unlike," he mused, "those two women; they're the same build, the same type, and I've always thought that a man never loves out of a certain type of woman. I guess I didn't do far wrong when I bought back the ranch from Mr. Furniss."

Delighted and pleased, humorous over the situation, he affirmed at the end of his little meditation, nodding briskly: "I guess that's the girl."

It wasn't until after supper that night, when the returned traveler had lighted his English briarwood pipe, discoursed on its merits, polished it up with the palm of his hand, forced the doctor to weigh it, and smell it, and admire it; it was not until they both sat in the doorway, smoking under the honeysuckle vine, that Doctor Brainard said:

"Miss Haven rode over to ask for you. It seems they've rented the Point Dexter place."

The adopted son took his pipe out of his mouth, smiled at it rapturously, and said:

"Gosh, isn't she a beauty?"

"She's a very handsome woman, indeed."

"I meant the pipe." John rubbed it on his sleeve until it shone.

"She seems to have a lot of spirit and charm, too," the doctor followed.

Then his companion asked: "Did she drive over here alone?"

"A groom came with her," replied Doctor Brainard, and before he could pursue any further hypocrisy, the young man said:

"It's a very rare thing, isn't it, doctor, that a man marries his first love?"

And the doctor agreed that it was very rare, indeed, thinking to himself:

"By George, the boy's going back to his old theme!"

"Milly Haven," said John meditatively, "was my first love."

CHAPTER XIX.

Seven years later he came back to Syracuse again and in the springtide.

Doctor Brainard had died suddenly, and amongst the bits of property left to him alongside of the doctor's fortune, John Bennett came into possession of the old James Street house.

He stood, toward four o'clock one afternoon, in the window of the empty dwelling. There were no household goods belonging to other people to distract him with strange memories or to suggest anything but his own people. He could see the lawns in the yard, green with the young growth of spring; the grass sown with gay dandelion heads. The brick path to the gate sagged and was broken up, the weeds grew over it, but even in the disuse and the lapse of time, the atmosphere of familiar things came back and met him there. He had ridden his bicycle like mad down the little brick walk to the gate; at the foot of the hill he had driven the rocking, tinkling horse car, proud of his responsibility.

Standing at the bare window, in the bare room, far away now from any other household and from any other treasures, he let himself think back. It was the very first time that he had given himself any such mental holiday as he now took for his own. It was his nature to avoid as far as he could all meditations and thoughts which gave him pain.

It was as plain to him as yesterday, how he had stood in that very window on the day of the auction and longed and yearned for the one possession that meant his father to him; how he had suffered there, a wretched, lonely, little boy, and how some one had come and helped him through.

He was past thirty now, young still, but he had matured and deepened as the years had sounded new depths in his loving, rich nature, and as home

life, husbandhood, and fatherhood had opened the springs of his heart.

But this return alone, to the old things and the old places, suddenly leveled like magic the distance between the little boy and the man, and, like his child self on the auction day, John acknowledged that in his heart were a yearning and a loneliness, and that there was something there which had never been really spoken to, a voice there to which nothing had ever answered.

As John so stood, reflecting, turning his mental and spiritual state over in his mind, he was waiting for nothing less practical than the builder with whom he had a rendezvous, who was to come and make plans for the new town house which he intended putting up here in Syracuse, where he should some day come and live.

The solitude of the rooms oppressed him; they stretched away empty, untenanted. He was going to change them all, the people whom he would fetch here to live had never known his boyhood's memories or any of his old life, and he didn't care that they should. He had been desolate here, and he was desolate now, as he gazed out on the sunny lawn, at the road and at the spring sunlight filling the town streets.

It was the inevitable isolation of soul, the solitude of being, the yearning of a man young, full of desire, very ardent and keen, for the absolute perfectness of an ideal, for the completion of some idea which he had never been entirely able to bring to its proper satisfaction.

As he allowed himself to understand this fact, the pang hurt him like a physical thing, his heart swelled within him. The associations around him had taken him violently back nearly twenty years, and the childhood agony that had shaken him here was no more real than that which swayed him now, and he wanted—wanted—to see her again. Now that he permitted himself to confess the fact and that he knew anger, revolt, blame, and reproach had long ago died, their very remnant fell away from her name and his memories of

her; he forgot that he had ever thought her a cruel, heartless coquette who had played with a man's heart and soul, he forgot everything excepting that she had been to him the one perfect woman, and that he wanted to see her just once more.

In these years, happy years, calm, successful, and harmonious, nothing had disturbed his content. He had put away the old love violently—and as desperately taken into his life the new. But now, here, to him here alone, in the very city that she lived in, her memory told him that he could never be happy or at peace any more, never be happy any more until he saw her. And that if then he saw her he should love her again, or rather found that he had never ceased to do so, if *this* happened his life was spoiled. He knew that nothing but her hands could close forever the doors between them—or open up upon the gardens of his old self, and his first great passion a promise of something from her still—the fulfillment to him of the promises she had never kept.

As he looked down the path to the road, a motor, driven by a man in livery, puffed up, stopped at his gate, and a lady got out of the car and came up the sagging brick path where the weeds had grown. He knew that it was Mrs. Nicholas Pyrnne; his heart beat like an engine in his breast, and he did not move, but waited as he was until she had come up the steps and her foot fell on the porch. He had not seen her since, in the drawing-room of her own house here in Syracuse, he had asked her to marry him, and she had told him she was engaged to Nicholas Pyrnne. She came in without ringing or knocking, for the door stood wide open, and before he could decide whether to run or stand fast, he knew without seeing her that she had come into the room and was standing before him. He never remembered whether he greeted her, there was a feeling that just as she passed the door, for a second, their hearts and senses and minds blent in mystical union, but the first words that he was conscious of hearing were practical and commonplace.

"I saw you at poor Doctor Brainard's funeral, last week. I was hoping in some way we would meet before you went back West. It's awfully good to see you again, John; I've had news of you from the boys. And how nice of you to telephone me, as you did just now from the old house, and how splendid that you're going to live here in Syracuse some day."

He had not looked at her yet. His heart, with every word she said, like something that must be tortured and sacrificed, was being led back into the foolish, dreadful, wonderful, beautiful, and agonizing past. He thought doggedly:

"There's nothing in her voice that's going to break the spell—there's no hope or help from that."

He had been a fool to send for her!

Mrs. Pyrnne laughed softly, and the sound was another pang, musical and humorous and sweet.

"Are you blind?" she asked him. "Have you lost your eyesight?"

For the last years now he had been reading the book of *young* beauty—and he had learned his lesson with great affection and sincere love. He had become a connoisseur of bloom; of soft, youthful lines; of slenderness and grace; of eyes fresh and blue as Irish lakes; of raven hair, glossy, not once touched by a white thread.

John looked then at Mrs. Pyrnne, and he put his hand out frankly and said, without any perceptible effort: "It was awfully good of you to come like this, Mrs. Pyrnne, but you were always good to me."

"I've been far better to you than you ever knew," she couldn't help saying. She didn't tell him that she realized how he found her changed. But his frankness, his sudden ease, his look of evident emancipation—oh, heavens! Virginia Bathurst had thought she knew what suffering was, she had thought when he left her that day in Syracuse, years ago, that she could never suffer again. She saw now that she had been wrong.

"You're going to make a lot of

changes here, aren't you? You're going to rebuild?"

The proprietor looked around the bare rooms with sudden interest.

"Yes, it's a little too small for the family as it is now, you know."

She nodded sympathetically.

"See," he indicated through the window, "there comes the architect, confound him, and who's that with him?"

"It's my husband."

They stood facing each other in the dismantled room. Then John Bennett was set mentally and spiritually free by the new sight of the woman he had adored. His passion was healed. He said warmly:

"I've never known how really bully you are, what a splendid friend you are, until now. Do you know, I've only cursed you all my life for making me suffer, but I understand that you meant something else by what you did, and though," he added, with tenderness, "I couldn't imagine a greater happiness than to have been your husband, still I know that when you were cruel to me you did not really mean to make me suffer for nothing."

Mrs. Bathurst rested her grave and beautiful eyes on John; her smile was adorable, she was a lovely woman still—lovely as the late rose is lovely when it lays its full-blown beauty against a patch of autumn sunlight on the wall before it withers and its petals fall. She put her hand on his shoulder, and it rested there like snow on the dark cloth.

"Your wife owes me a great deal, John Bennett, although I don't suppose she knows it, for you were a very determined lover, John."

His heart began to beat again.

"*You taught me how to love.*"

Still thinking how charming and wonderful she had been, how more charming and more wonderful she now was putting as she did her master touch to all by setting him free, by leaving his mind and imagination free to love and care for Milly, whom, until this moment, he had never really been free to love with all his power—haunted as he had been, tempted, assailed with his

image of Virginia Bathurst—still realizing how grateful he was to her, John said:

"I have been mad enough to think more than once of that last night in Bathurst House and what you promised me then." He flushed as he spoke. "Of course, you don't remember, but you said—"

She interrupted him. "I said I would give you all."

He nodded. "I built my life upon that."

A shadow crossed her face, and she answered hesitatingly: "I can't see why you should recall this now."

And he replied, having grown wise in his emancipation:

"I see to-day for the first time that when you said that you meant that you would give me just what I have to-day. I mean to say—my wife and children."

The lady forced herself to smile.

"You're a very clever man, John."

And he exclaimed, delighted at his wisdom: "Well, I've just thought it all out now—and you were a wonder, a wonder!"

She laughed. "So were you, John, so were you!"

The light poured full from the window upon her now, revealing her plainly to him. She knew perfectly well, as every beautiful woman knows well, that her hair was marked with gray and that her bloom was faded, but she stood fearlessly in the garish, pitiless light. So in this very house it had shone on her twenty years ago in the fresh bloom of her beauty. Her hand

was on John's shoulder still, and he covered it with both of his. Something in her laugh brought back for a moment his old despair.

"Oh"—he drew in a long breath—"do you know that I went through hell for you? If you had cared for me even a little, no matter what you thought you ought to have done, you couldn't have treated me as you did. It must have helped you splendidly not to care."

She shook her head. "You don't seem to have quite forgiven me, John." And to herself she said: "Ah, I didn't suppose I would have to go through just this again!"

"Oh, yes, I do; I have forgiven," he replied, "but it's a very fresh forgiveness. I've only just forgiven you today."

In spite of herself she breathed: "And you talk about cruelty!"

But she smiled with her words: and hearing the steps of the two men on the porch, John said quickly:

"Do you know that you owe me many, many—"

He didn't finish. Mrs. Pyrnne bent toward him. She blushed. She didn't kiss him, but for just a second her fragrant cheek lay against his lips, as the full-blown rose lays its beauty to the sun; and then, as they stood apart, Nicholas Pyrnne and the architect came in. In the next five seconds, after he had greeted the two gentlemen, John Bennett, with great show of interest, was indicating to Mr. Pyrnne and the builder where he wanted the front window to be cut out and transformed into a bow.



THE SONG

NOONTIDE sun is in your voice
And the spring;
Forgotten dreams are coming true
While you sing.

Gathering night and blinded eyes—
Memory's pain.
Tho' dreams are fading into death
Yet—sing again.

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.

AROUND THE BRIDGE TABLE



By Arthur Loring Bruce



HERE seems to be no end to the stories one hears of cheating at bridge. We used to believe that these tales were all malicious inventions, but, of late, the scandals have increased at such a rate that we are inclined to think that there must be a pinch of truth in them somewhere. For instance: In a well-known card club in New York there was, until quite recently, a gentleman who had a morbid love of cutting low for partners and for the first deal. This little passion of his cost him his position in New York society and, incidentally, his membership in the aforementioned club.

It fell out in this wise. He—Mr. X. we shall call him—found that by putting an ace on the top of a pack and covering it with four cards the ace would become, very naturally, the fifth card from the top. By then riffing the pack on the table and choosing the fifth card in the spiral, or fan, he was certain to get an ace and, presumably, the deal. The frequency with which this polished gentleman cut the first deal finally became the matter of heated discussion in his club and, one winter's evening, it was proposed to watch him very carefully and take action against him if the suspicions of the gossips proved true. The three gentlemen composing the house committee asked Mr. X. to make up a rubber at fairly high points. Three times, within the next hour or so, did Mr. X. reach over, after a completed

rubber, and pick up a pack of cards, only to shuffle them, look, every now and again, at the bottom cards, cut them, place a few cards on top, and otherwise manipulate them, and *mira-bile dictu*, three times did he cut an ace or a deuce. When the séance was over the three gentlemen retired to the hall and held a short consultation. All three of them were convinced that Mr. X. had prepared the packs before cutting for partners, but none of them wanted the unpleasant honor of bringing charges against him.

In the course of two or three days Mr. X. reappeared at this well-known card club and was handed the following sealed note by the doorman:

The house committee has reason to believe that the governors of this club would accept your resignation if you were to hand it in before their next regular meeting.

The next day his resignation was in the hands of the governors. Mr. X. has always been considered a good enough fellow, and his business reputation has been of the highest, but in such a trifling and petty thing as five-cent bridge he simply could not run straight.

Another scandal now going the rounds is that of Mr. and Mrs. T., the young married couple in Philadelphia who played such excellent bridge, who were so pleasant to play with, and who won such a very considerable amount of money at the game in the politest circles of Philadelphia society. That they have lately come such a fearful cropper is due to Mrs. A., a lady who teaches excellent bridge in the Quaker City. It seems that the T.s always

insisted on playing together. Their reason for refusing to be pitted against each other at the bridge table was the reason given by so many married couples.

As they both liked to play for money it was absurd for them to gamble against one another, as they had a common purse for their gains and losses at bridge, etc., etc.

Now, before proceeding with this recital, I must pause to advise married couples to play at different tables if it can be conveniently arranged. I know that it seems absurd to suppose that ladies and gentlemen might be suspected of having private signals at the card table, but it is just as well to give the gossips, malicious or otherwise, no ground for their suspicions.

Mr. and Mrs. T., up to this year, had had a very lucky career at bridge and had become famous for their skill and daring at the game. When Mrs. A. heard on all sides that the T.s were the best players in the city, she became a little nettled, as she was sure that she and another lady, a pupil of hers, could defeat them at every point of the game.

A match was accordingly arranged at the house of the young married couple. Mrs. A., who was comfortably ahead of the game as a result of her successful winter of teaching, suggested twenty-cent points, and the match was soon under way at these stakes. After two or three rubbers it occurred to Mrs. A. that the T.s understood their game almost too perfectly. They seemed invariably to open the right suit; they always left the make when dummy seemed to demand it; whenever they doubled a make they invariably floated gracefully on to victory. Mrs. A.'s eyes were beginning to open and her little store of cash to vanish.

With the score twenty-four all Mrs. T. dealt, hesitated for an instant only, and left the make to dummy, who declared hearts, with seven hearts and five honors. When the hand had been played out and when Mrs. T. had scored up a small slam, Mrs. A. observed acidly to Mrs. T.:

"How was it that, having six diamonds in your hand with the four top honors, you happened to pass it to your husband?"

"Oh," said Mrs. T. "I always somehow hate to make it a diamond."

A little later, with the score love all, Mr. T. dealt himself three aces and a king. Notwithstanding this compulsory no trumper he left it to his wife, who declared hearts, with seven hearts and three honors. This was a little too much for Mrs. A. She had not seen a trace of a signal between the T.s, but rage and suspicion had got the best of her. She rose majestically from the table and said that she must refuse to go on with the rubber. On being questioned as to her reason for this she simply observed: "I don't like your makes" and, with her partner, she calmly and sedately left the house after settling for every rubber but the last.

That evening she confided the adventure to a feminine friend, under a strict promise of secrecy, and the next morning it was all over Philadelphia. On the following evening it was discussed in all the clubs and suburbs, and finally reached a New York society journal, where it was printed with the usual circumlocution and vivid coloring peculiar to tattling periodicals of this class.

The next move was a suit brought by the T.s against Mrs. A. for defamation of character, and a threatened countersuit against the T.s for obtaining money under false pretenses. A short while ago the whole potter was arranged by a written apology from Mrs. A., but the T.s now find it very difficult to scare up a rubber. Indeed, the sympathy of most people is with Mrs. A. as, perhaps, it should be, in view of the two startling makes that were left to dummy by Mr. and Mrs. T.

Of course if two perfect bridge players play much together, their game, to the onlookers, seems almost like necromancy. It is extraordinary what subtle mysteries their brains seem to divine. Of this phenomenon there can

be no question, but it takes a little more than skill to pick up a hand with six diamonds to four top honors and leave the make to dummy, who has, incredible as it may seem, seven hearts and five honors. Skill will do many wonderful things, but it won't see through the backs of average playing cards.

When two good players thoroughly understand each other there can be nothing prettier than to watch them play partners against two slightly inferior players. Their cards seem, somehow, fairly to talk. Every card seems to have its mysterious double meaning—the one the obvious or visible meaning, the other an esoteric and almost uncanny significance. One discard will murmur "Follow me," another will whisper "Partner, avoid me, for I shall bring you ruin." The eight spot of spades is led and, presto, it reveals to the leader's partner the exact position of every spade in the pack. In and out the cards seem magically to weave through the warp of the dummy; escaping danger, inflicting wounds, gliding like serpents through the high cards in the maker's hand, and carrying everywhere a message, a purpose, a desire! To the born whist player the message of the cards is easy to read, but to the solid, imaginative, "rule" player, more than half of the whispers of the cards remain totally unheard and undreamed of.

At the beginning of the eighth trick a good bridge player can place the remaining cards with an almost mathematical certainty. I have seen it tried, and successfully, over and over again. After the seventh trick, there are no rules. There are, then, nothing but facts. When we watch such American players as Mr. Elwell, Mr. Street, Mr. Foster, Mr. Dodson, the actor; Mr. Charles Schwab, and Mr. Harry Ward we become convinced that it is not merely skill that these men possess at cards, but a certain inborn genius, a thing which no study, alas, will ever bring to us, a sense, an instinct, a gift, like an ear for music or the imagination and intuitive sympathy of a great poet or novelist.

Opposed to such natural card geniuses as these there are the great lawyers, the great doctors, and scientists, who study bridge year after year and seem to be no nearer perfection than when they first commenced playing. Here is an example, culled from a collection of thousands of similar blunders by intelligent men and women.

I was playing a very close rubber on the Via Goito, in Rome, with Baron R., an Italian nobleman, as a partner. He was one of the leading economists and financial authorities of the day and had been an under minister of finance in King Humbert's time. He had played bridge for nearly two years. We were eighteen all on the rubber game and hearts were trumps. We each had three cards left in hand. The baron held the ace and queen of hearts (trumps) and a losing club. The king and one other heart were held somewhere against him. We had taken six tricks and it was his turn to play. Dummy, who was to play after him, held three losing cards and no trump. Now it seems almost incredible that a man of parts, an ex-minister, a writer on finance, could be in any doubt as to what to play at such a crisis. By leading his losing club the lead *must* come up to his ace and queen of trumps and we must make two tricks, or sixteen points, and the rubber. If I had the winning club, and it was not trumped, we could make three tricks.

Any child should have reasoned out the situation correctly. Not to do so denied a person a measure of mentality above that of an ape, but my minister thought long and seriously of the matter, looked wisely at the score, sighed, and shot out his ace of trumps; the dealer followed with a small trump; my partner now hurled the queen into the embraces of the king, who, in company with the best diamond, was awaiting her in the dealer's hand. My best club was, of course, useless, and we had lost the rubber. At this point I mentally congratulated Italy on being rid of such an adviser.

I have seen thousands of such idiotic plays as this, and perpetrated by men

of more than ordinary mental gifts. It was said of Shelley that he could not do a sum in simple subtraction, and of Steinitz, the chess marvel, that he could not memorize ten lines of poetry. How strange are the vagaries of genius—and of bridge players!

There is a wonderfully true saying that everybody thinks he can drive a horse and build a fire, but we may add to it another that is more wonderful still: "Everybody *knows* that he can play bridge."

I have so often heard men say: "Yes, I like bridge as a *pastime*, but I should never dream of *studying* it. I don't approve of taking my pleasures too seriously."

What utter nonsense this is. Should a man spend his holidays playing polo without knowing how to ride? Should a man play poker who pays no attention to what his fellow players have drawn? There are rules in bridge, established customs, and recognized leads. Why won't men learn them? They are simple enough, Heaven knows, and yet we see men year after year stumbling along from one morass into another, opening every hand incorrectly, refusing to cover honors, finesing against their partner, and committing every abomination known in bridge, simply because they are too lazy to pick up a book and spend an evening or two in learning the first principles of good play.

If a man leads the two of hearts in a no-trump hand from a suit composed of the ace, queen, 9, 8, 6, 3, 2, he will perhaps make as many tricks in that suit as if he had opened the 8, but his partner will put him down for a four-card suit and perhaps abandon the suit in favor of one that looks a little more promising. This is only one of the thousand or so obvious things that a man might learn if he would condescend to study a little the pages of, let us say, Mr. Elwell's books on bridge.

Here is a truly remarkable bridge problem, one of the most difficult ten-card problems that I have ever met with. My readers may care to puzzle over it, although I doubt if many of

them will succeed in solving it. It was invented by Mr. C. T. Milliken, a fertile and subtle originator of such problems.

A. and B. are partners. Spades are trumps. A. is to lead, and, with B. as a partner, is to take nine out of the ten tricks against any possible defense. The hands are all exposed and are dealt in the following order:

A. (leader). Ace, queen, 4 of clubs. King, 10, 6, 5 of diamonds. Ace, queen, 9 of spades.

Y. (to the left of leader). King, jack, 8 of hearts. Five of clubs. Queen, jack, 9 of diamonds. Seven, 4, 3 of spades.

B. (dummy). Ace, queen, 10, 5, 3 of hearts. Eight of diamonds. Ten, 6, 5, 2 of spades.

Z. (to the right of leader). Nine, 7, 6, 4 of hearts. Nine, 8, 7 of clubs. King, jack, 8 of spades.

As this problem is so extremely difficult I feel justified in giving my readers a slight hint or clue to guide them. Here it is, then: The only trick that Y. and Z. are allowed to make is the 9 of clubs in Z.'s hand.

The full solution of the problem will be found at the end of this article.

I have noted, of late, all over the country a steady growth of bridge playing, and, what is more, I think I detect a little less prejudice against it on all sides and a little more tolerance in people's minds for those unfortunate beings who are a prey to its insidious delights. As far back as March 15th, 1907, I remember reading that, in Salt Lake City, Senator Williams had introduced a bill in the State Senate making the playing of bridge whist for money or for a prize a felony punishable by imprisonment from two to five years. After much discussion the bill was passed, but I doubt if it ever became law, as I have heard of no women of fashion being dragged from their splendid residences in a black Maria to the gates of the Utah donjon keeps. I am afraid that Senator Williams must be, like all Western senators, a relentless foe of anything that tends to dim

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the glory or check the sway of our great national game of poker.

Should Governor Hughes read these few lines I trust that he will forbear attempting to incarcerate all the Albany ladies who have done so much to make bridge popular in our capital city. Should he, however, pass such a law in New York, I predict that our prisons will become the most delightful dwelling places in the State, and that over fifty per cent. of their inhabitants will be lovely ladies of fashion, who cannot be kept from their rubbers by the enactments of laws, the thickest of prison walls, or the voice of their paternal governor.

Solution of the ten-card spade problem quoted in the body of this article.

To take nine tricks, A. and B. must contrive to place Z. in the lead after the trumps have all been taken out, and he must be made to lead a heart up to B.'s tenace in that suit. Y., at the same time, must be forced to throw away two red cards. Any attempt to compel Z. to take the lead at the sixth trick in the trump suit will not succeed. The most obvious—but erroneous—line of solution for this problem begins as follows: Trick 1. A. 4 clubs. Y. 5 clubs. B. 2 spades. Z. 7 clubs.

Trick 2. B. 5 spades. Z. 8 spades. A. queen spades. Y. 3 spades.

But the problem cannot be solved by this sort of an opening unless Z. is made to play the 8 of spades at trick 2, which is an obviously bad play. Z.

should, of course, play the jack of spades instead of the 8, and, if he does so, A. and B. cannot take nine out of the ten tricks.

The proper solution is as follows (the underlined card wins the trick):

Trick 1. Ace clubs, 5, 2 spades, 7 clubs. B. trumps his partner's winning card so as to lead trumps through Z.

Trick 2. Five spades, jack, queen, 3.

Trick 3. Queen clubs, 9 diamonds, 10 spades, 8 clubs. Again B. must trump one of A.'s winning cards, and this time with a high trump as, if he were to trump with the 6 and led the 10 at the next round, Z. would naturally decline to cover it, which would ultimately prevent the leader and his partner from making the required nine tricks.

Trick 4. Six spades, 8, 9, 4.

Trick 5. Ace spades, 7, 3 hearts, king spades.

Trick 6. Four clubs, 8 hearts, 5 hearts, 9 clubs. A. has played very cleverly in ridding himself of his high clubs and keeping the four, as this enables him to throw the lead into Z.'s hand with the 9 of clubs. At this trick, too, Y. is forced to discard a heart, or else to throw a diamond, thereby making all of A.'s diamonds good.

Trick 7. Four hearts, 5 diamonds, jack hearts, queen hearts.

Trick 8. Ace hearts, 6, 6 diamonds, king hearts.

Trick 9. Ten hearts, 7, 10 diamonds, jack diamonds.

Trick 10. Eight diamonds, 9 hearts, king diamonds, queen diamonds.



THE LION TAMER

By



Campbell Mac Culloch



If you have ever passed along the Jericho Pike you have seen the place, for while unpretentious to the last degree, it is a landmark for miles around; perhaps the most famous of all the residences in a distinctly desirable neighborhood—to the younger folk at least. Yet one could not conscientiously call it commodious, for it is merely an abandoned street car of a vintage that dates back to the pre-trolley days. The wheels that once bore it have long since disappeared, and the front platform has given way to a pair of neat steps. The structure now rests upon two mouldering sills, and these are supported upon four ancient cedar posts. When last I saw it the color scheme was a quiet, restful green picked out with soft yellow stripes, though little enough of all this could be seen, for the sides and front, and even a portion of the roof were covered with morning-glories.

I had been walking for an hour or more in a desperate effort to dispel a fit of the blue devils, and as I rounded a weed-grown corner I came full upon the place. It seemed for the moment a mass of color spread over a quarter acre of ground, and the impression gained was that a rainbow had been broken into fine chaff and scattered with a prodigal hand over a bit of wilderness. In a rocking-chair that was placed close beside the steps was a woman; silver-haired and wrinkled,

and knee-deep in a corner of the radiant garden stood a man upon whom her eyes were bent, a clean-shaven old chap with a sheaf of whiteness upon his head and a curious litherness in his movements that showed even above the grasp that age had laid upon him.

He glanced up as I stopped near the palæ fence and smiled at me.

"It's—it's—wonderful," I said lamely, for caught red-handed, I was compelled to fall back upon such a trite thing as some measure of excuse for what seemed like rudeness. He stood up straight and passed his hand through his hair.

"We think it pretty," he answered, looking about quietly, and I saw that his eyes rested longest on the woman in the chair. "You've been walking," he went on, with a glance at my dust-covered shoes and trousers. "Won't you come in a little while?"

He moved quickly forward and swung open the little gate as he spoke, and I stepped within upon a white pathway of crushed shells. For an instant I stood just inside and looked about me. On the other side of a clump of trees there sounded a raucous train whistle, and I felt suddenly grateful that it sounded far off and unreal. Then I followed him up the path.

"If I might trouble you for a glass of water—" I began, and he motioned to the little step upon which a cushion was laid, then turned to the woman.

"Mother," he said softly, "he thinks the flowers look"—he cast a quizzical

glance at me—"wonderful. Sit down, sir," he went on to me, while the woman smiled gently and folded her hands in her lap.

"We're fond of them," she said, and looked up into her companion's face. He touched her upon the hair and went off into the little place. Sitting facing her as I was, I could see within and encompass the whole of it at a single glance. There was a white iron bed in the farther corner; a white muslin-covered table at one side that bore some simple toilet articles; a drop shelf hinged to the wall opposite it; a rack with china upon it above this; a lamp in a wall bracket near by, two chairs, some simple pictures, and a corner curtained off. Near the front were two other chairs and another shelf with a few books, and that seemed all.

The man came back to me with a glass of water, and I drank it slowly.

It was from that our friendship began, and I fell into the habit of calling on those two old folks whenever the fits of depression pursued me over the roads; the devils born of evil and old night. It was there a month later that I heard the story of the lion tamer—but you shall hear it yourself.

It came at the close of a brilliant day when the clump of uneasy trees close by were murmuring their gratitude that the sun had gone to leave them to the restful cool of evening. I sat again upon the cushion on the lower step. There was a little shift of the wind, and on the heels of the breeze came a breath of perfume so different from the gentle odor of the flowers that I exclaimed aloud.

"What is that?" I asked. "Something new? It smells like—" Abruptly the woman rose from her rocking-chair and entered the little house, closing the door gently behind her. The man looked up at me and sighed with the faint trace of an apologetic smile upon his face.

"You will excuse her," he said. "It is—something that—comes back with the scent of the flower."

"What flower?" I asked curiously.

"We never knew," he replied, looking

out across the garden. "It is tall and white, and it blooms late."

"Why do you grow it if it affects her so?" I went on, and he looked at me squarely.

"There are things one would forget, and that yet should be remembered," he replied with dignity, and we sat some time in silence. I watched him as he stared unseeing into the growing twilight, and wondered what thing there was that must be remembered. Quite suddenly he arose and opened the door of the hut, putting his head inside.

"He should know, I think, dear," I heard him say, "but not if—"

There was a murmur in response, and he sat down again in the chair he had vacated. For a time he looked moodily at the ground and began abruptly:

"It was the season I was with Birch and Barton's show," he said and looked at me. "You did not know we had been circus people, did you? That was thirty years ago. Ours was a small affair—an offshoot of one of the big shows that dared not countenance gamblers and sharpers with them, and yet one that could not bear to see such money escape. There never was a Birch, or a Barton either, though we had great pictures of them; two round-faced men with black mustaches." He smiled and dropped by degrees into the argot of the sawdust ring and brotherhood. It was as if he traveled back over the trail of those thirty careworn years in a flash of thought.

"I was a 'top mounter' in those days," he went on. "You perhaps would call me an acrobat. We were doing five States in the middle West and they were rough. Ours was a wagon show, and business had been bad for weeks. I remember it as if it were yesterday. We were about a hundred miles north of Vicksburg, though I forget the name of the town, when Tom Macklin, the manager, came to me one afternoon when we had pitched upon the lot.

"I wired the old man to send us on a good feature act and some paper for it," he said. "They'll join us in Proby-

town to-morrow morning. And none too soon, for we need boosting badly.'

"What act is it?" I asked him, for I knew all the regulars then.

"Rousseau's Lions," he told me, "and from what I hear it's a wonder."

"More cats," I remarked quickly, and felt worried, for I always hated the whole tribe. I was never with a show in all my life that the beasts did not cause trouble.

"Well," he growled, "we've got to have something to back you benders up," and left me.

The next day the big lion act arrived. Rousseau was a powerful-looking Russian who'd been over here long enough to pick up the language and some of our ways. He was a nasty-tempered brute, though, and none of us ever took to him. He had his wife along, and from the first I could see it was a toss-up which got the worse treatment—Minnie Leondo, as she was then called, or the cats—for he seemed to have a continuous fit of the sulks, and when he had been drinking a little it was his habit to hunt up his lions, provoke them into a rage, and then beat them with a piece of iron pipe he kept handy until they screamed like human beings. There was no doubt that he had them cowed, and I could see from the look on Minnie's face that she always feared her time was coming next.

"She was a pale little thing then, all blonde and kind of shrinking, and so pretty—like a fine picture—and I used to wonder how he ever induced her to marry him. I had an idea that she was not the sort that comes to circus life, but she never talked directly about it to any one. It was in the cook tent I first spoke to her, about three days after they joined, and I could see at the time that he did not like it, but I passed it over and left her alone, for I did not want to get her into trouble.

"I found out from Tim Paulson, our boss canvasman, who had known them before with the Flavin Show, that Rousseau had picked her up back East and had broke her in with the cats, and that he had got tired of her in about

two months. He kept her because she could do more with the animals than any one he had ever had. Gradually I began to see quite a lot of her, and we came to be good friends in a sort of way. She began to talk about her home gradually, and one night she cried because she could never go back there to them all again.

"It was after the show and we were standing outside the dressing tent while the men were striking the big top, when Rousseau shoved his arm out of the flap and caught her by the shoulder. He pulled her savagely inside, and she screamed in a smothered kind of way. Then I heard him say:

"I hav told you to keep away from these tumblers. You do so or some day—"

"I didn't get the rest, but I could feel her shrink back from him, and I knew that he had threatened her. I pulled the flap of the tent open and jumped inside. He was standing in the middle of the space with his fist raised, and his black eyes were snapping. He looked at me and snarled:

"What you want, eh?"

"I was not at all afraid of him, I think, so I answered:

"I want you to keep a civil tongue in your head for one thing, my friend; and for another, you talk too freely about—"

"Without a word he leaped at me with a roar that sounded like one of his own lions. I had a laying-out pin in my hands, and as he came for me I struck him. He crumpled up like a dead thing and fell in a soft heap. Minnie saw it, and when he went down she stared at me. Did you ever take a splinter from a dog's foot? Do you remember how he looked at you? That was the way Minnie looked at me then. She came over to me quietly and put her hand upon my arm, looking up into my face.

"'You've killed him,' she whispered, with a little shiver.

"'No, more's the pity,' I answered her. 'Though I'm sorry, I think.'

"She straightened up, and her little, soft face grew hard.

"So am I, Jim Radburn," she said, and threw her arms up over her head and clinched her fists. Her hair had come down, I remember, from the shaking he had given her, and the white was still in her face. As she stood there she cursed him slow and earnest—not the kind of curses men use, but the Bible kind, perhaps. It gave me the shivers to hear her, and I was just going to stop her when Tom Macklin came in. He saw Rousseau on the ground and me with the laying-out pin in my hand, and he knew.

"You've raised—hell, haven't you, Radburn?" he said quietly. "Is he gone?"

"I don't think I'll ever forget that, long ago as it is now. We three standing there in the dim tent lit only with a gasoline flare, and the man on the ground, all rigged out in his fine costume."

The old fellow swallowed hard for a moment or two, and wiped his forehead with his hand. Then he went on:

"Minnie had come to herself by then, and looked as if she had never seen the place before. Then her eye caught Rousseau, and with a little moan she dropped upon the ground beside him and pushed back his eyelid. As she did it he quivered all over, and she shrank away from him as if he had been a diamond rattler. Macklin turned to me.

"Better get out of this, Radburn," he said, "and keep out of his way if you can. He's bad all over. Go on; Minnie here will fix him up."

"She turned on him with her eyes blazing.

"Minnie'd see him rot in hades before she'd do anything for him, now! Oh, god!" she cried, looking up. "I hate him so bad I'd give anything to see him—dead! Look what he's done!"

"She spoke in a kind of screaming whisper, and tore her waist open at the top. She was covered with a criss-cross of welts all over her back, shoulders, and breast. It was a sight to make a man turn sick. Macklin swore out loud, and for a minute I wondered if it wouldn't be right to finish the job I'd begun, right there.

"That's what he did to me," she whispered. "That's what he's been doing to me for eight months now! I hate him! Hate him! What did he marry me for?"

"She sat down suddenly on the little wardrobe trunk and dropped her face into her hands.

"When he's near me I hate him—just like I said," she moaned. "When he's away I love him so I wouldn't care if he killed me when he came back, if he'd only come."

"She looked up at us with an odd little twisted smile.

"Sounds queer, don't it?" she said. "If they came to me somewhere out there and told me, I'd scratch your eyes out, Jim Radburn, for what you did to him—if he wasn't near me. But now, I love you for it, and there's nothing I wouldn't do for you."

"She rocked herself forward and back upon the trunk, and Macklin and I stared at her helplessly. Finally he turned to me.

"Well, I'll be—" he began, and choked off short with a rattle of his throat. "Looks like you've got into a mess, Jim," he went on to me. "Better get out of this, and I'll send Doc Thornton over to fix him up. We're pulling out in half an hour."

"Then he walked away and left us together. Minnie looked up at me.

"I meant that, Jim," she said. "Not in the way some of them might mean, but you've been good to me, and I'll not forget it."

"Thornton, the doctor with the show, came in then and I left.

"The next afternoon I was in the menagerie tent after the show talking to Macklin when Rousseau came in. He was little the worse except for a strip of plaster, and he had gone through his act without effort. He paid no attention to us, if he saw us, but walked right across to his cages.

"It was queer to see those lions. When he went close to the bars and looked at them they crowded close up against the other side of the cage and snarled at him. They hated him, and showed it in every muscle. He laughed

at them and turned to speak to one of the helpers near by. As he did so he moved about so his side was to the cage. One of them—the one he called Nero—sneaked over and wiped him down one arm with his paw. If Rousseau had been two inches nearer it would have ripped him from shoulder to wrist, but it only tore his sleeve out.

"Rousseau turned quickly, and the lion sprang back against the bars on the other side so hard they sprung with the shock. The man said something to them; I couldn't catch what it was, and then reached under the cage and pulled out the piece of iron pipe. Macklin swore under his breath.

"The fool's going in there," he said. "He'll be killed!"

"Neither of us moved; we just waited to see what would happen. He went up to the cage door and tore it open, and as he did so the four lions fell back in the far corner in a heap like a group of frightened puppies. He slammed the door shut after him, and called something to them in Russian. If those bars had not been so strong they would have torn their way out. As it was they bent. He laughed at them again, and walked over until he was close to the big Nero. The beast lifted one paw in a half-hearted way, and Rousseau struck it down with his pipe. Then he grabbed the animal by the ear.

"'What a fool!' groaned Macklin in my ear.

"By this time every one in the place had stopped work and come up, and Macklin turned to Hennessey, the head keeper.

"Get the irons!" he said in a hoarse whisper, and Hennessey sent four of his men for them quick.

"Then the thing started. It fairly made me sick to see the way that brute used the poor beast. He jerked him into the centre of the cage, still hanging to the ear, and it sounded like some one beating a bass drum. He smashed the animal over the head and the back, and up and down the ribs; pounded him over the legs, and back on the head again until I thought he'd kill him.

"All the time there was a roaring

that was deafening. Finally Rousseau backed the lion into the bars, and when he rose upon his hind legs with his back to them he prodded him in the stomach. From that moment there was never any question in my mind about the fellow's courage, for it takes that and some strength to handle a four-hundred-pound lion. When he had finished he cuffed the poor beast, walked to the door, threw it open, and stepped out.

"Macklin turned to me with his mouth open, and said:

"How would you like to have him ____?" And then he stopped, and muttering something that sounded like an apology, left me. I knew what he was thinking; that it would be my turn next. However, it did not worry me, for like many circus folk, I traveled with a comfortable weight in my hip pocket, and I knew I could take care of myself if necessary.

"I saw practically nothing of Minnie for a week, and then I noticed that she seemed to have struck up quite a friendship with Thornton, the doctor. This was strange, for the man was the most disreputable scarecrow I had ever seen masquerading as a physician. I learned that he had been an Edinburgh man with a splendid practice fifteen years before, but at the time I speak of he was a physical wreck. There was never a question as to his ability, and I had watched him do a trephining on a table beneath a gasoline flare. It was one of our men who had got a fractured skull from a pole. He got better, too.

"I remember that one of the clowns was reading in a paper of an operation on a man's brain and told the rest. It had been called the Delorme operation, after the man who had performed it. Thornton, who had been listening, looked up and laughed.

"I invented that ten years ago," he said. "I was an orderly in Bellevue then. I showed Broughton how it should be done, and he performed it on a sailor."

"He had an old newspaper clipping to prove it.

"Still, I could not understand what interest he could have for Minnie, and it puzzled me for a week. I had avoided watching Rousseau's act for some time, for it made me nervous. Perhaps—"

He stopped and remained silent for a time, then threw his head up and looked at me.

"Why should I conceal it? I know what I hoped deep down in my heart, though I was afraid to admit it to myself. I hoped that some day the lions would—get him. It is a terrible thought, that, to wish for the death of a fellow creature, and I knew it, and kept away.

"Then one day I overheard two of the men express the same thing, and I suppose I felt more comfortable. That afternoon I watched Rousseau's performance, and got a surprise. When the cage was rolled in Rousseau followed it, with Minnie. He went right up to the cage and stood on the steps a moment bowing. Then he went inside and those lions wept over him. It was just as if they had been worrying all day to see him, and could hardly wait. They rubbed against him, purred, and licked his hands. I opened my eyes wide, but it was a fact. While I was thinking the remarkable change over, I heard a voice at my side.

"'Queer, that, eh?' and I found Macklin standing near me.

"'What is it?' I asked him.

"'Give it up,' he answered laconically. 'It's been like that for three days now. It began Thursday afternoon, and they've been so ever since.'

"For the first time I went in search of Minnie later that afternoon. She smiled at me, but only said:

"'It is strange, isn't it?'

"I looked her straight in the eyes, and she flushed a little and laughed at me.

"'How does he treat you?' I asked her bluntly.

"'Splendidly,' she answered brightly. 'Even better than when we were first married.'

"'You mean he doesn't—strike you?' I went on.

"'He—loves me,' she answered, showing her teeth, but there was a little tang in the smile that disturbed me.

"'What caused it?' I asked.

"'He has just changed; that's all,' she replied, and I was going to ask her another thing when Thornton came in quickly. He did not see me, for I stood at one side of the small tent. He seemed excited.

"'I've got it,' he exclaimed, and was trying to drag something from his pocket when she coughed quickly, and he glanced up and caught sight of me. He seemed startled for a moment; then leered at me with his bloodshot eyes.

"'How are you, Radburn?' he said. 'I didn't see you.'

"'So I noticed,' I answered shortly. 'Don't mind me. I'm going.'

"Her friendship with the man, the inexplicable change in the demeanor of the cats, and a something that seemed to tell me there was trouble somewhere, bothered me. It wasn't natural for beasts to act in that way. They don't change their ideas so suddenly, and men don't as a rule go back to loving the woman they've tired of—and beaten.

"Near the ticket wagon I met Rousseau suddenly. He came around from the other side, and we almost ran into each other. Instinctively I put my hand to my pocket, but he laughed easily and waved his hand.

"'No, no. It is not necessary, the gun,' he said. 'I am holding no grudge to you. Let us forget, eh?'

"I looked at him keenly, but he stood there smiling with his hand held out.

"'That will be all right, Rousseau,' I said. 'I'll take your word for it.'

"He laughed and came closer.

"'I mean it,' he said. 'There shall be no further ill feelings. I deserve what you did for me.'

"He looked as if he meant it, and I shook hands with him. We spoke a few words more and I left him. I was smoking, and I put my hand up to take my cigar when I smelt perfume. I never used it myself, and wondered where it came from. Then I noticed it

must be on my hand, and sniffed it again. It was a queer scent—like nothing I had ever known before. For a moment I wondered where I had got it, and remembered I had shaken hands with Rousseau, but it occurred to me that I had never noticed that he used the stuff before. It was so strange I would have recalled it.

"Within an hour a pony that had always laid back his ears and kicked savagely at me when I passed him, pricked up his ears and muzzled at my hand, and when I drew away from him, he whinnied after me. I was leaving the cook tent after supper that evening when I saw Thornton coming toward me. He had been drinking, and as he came opposite me a thought occurred to me. I put out my hand and took him by the arm. Without really thinking of what I was doing, I turned him about.

"'Thornton,' I said, 'how much did Rousseau give you for what you did for him?'

"He leaped as if some one had struck him, and stood there shaking all over.

"'Rousseau?' he exclaimed. 'Why, nothing!'

"I took him by the collar of the coat and brought him close to me.

"'It won't do, Thornton,' I said. 'What was that stuff you gave him?'

"I had been thinking of the lions, and the way the pony treated me. Thornton gave way quickly when he looked into my face. For a moment I thought he was going to fall, but to my astonishment he straightened himself, and something that must have been in him before his fall came back.

"'It is none of your business, Radburn,' he said quietly. 'It is purely a professional matter between Miss Leondro and myself. Kindly take your hand from my collar.'

"He surprised me so that I dropped my hand before I thought. I looked at him, but his temporary burst of spirit had evaporated, and he was again the cringing wreck.

"'You and me were always good friends, Jim,' he whined. 'I didn't know you'd found out about it. You won't tell, will you?'

"'Tell me about it,' I answered him.

"Bit by bit the story came out. For years Thornton had kept an idea back in that sodden brain of his; the distaste one creature has for another, and he had worked it out into a simple question of personal odor. He told me he and his father had never gotten on well together, but when they were apart they had felt real affection for each other, though the moment they met they quarreled. It was a result of one of these quarrels that had led to the trouble that finally drove him out of Edinburgh. He had never ceased thinking it out.

"A month or so before he had mentioned the matter to Minnie in the way of personal history. The night of my encounter with Rousseau she had gone to him and had asked him pointblank if he really had faith in his idea, and whether or not it could be corrected—the antagonism—of course. The conversation ended with Thornton giving her some sachet powder he had compounded himself from a flower he did not mention. She had been told to put it in the trunk in which Rousseau kept his ring costumes, and among her own garments.

"'And it worked,' Thornton told me. 'When there's antagonism of that sort it is purely a question of rudimentary sense of smell. You may think you are unable to detect it, but it reaches your subconsciousness, and conveys the impression.'

"I scoffed at him, but he protested with tears in his bleared eyes that it was a scientific fact.

"'It is true, Radburn; on my word as a gen—as a physician. Did you ever hear of anything like the way in which those cats turned right about? Isn't Rousseau infatuated with the girl?'

"'Hold on!' I told him. 'If that is true, why does not Minnie feel the effect of it herself?'

"'She does,' he grinned. 'But she knows the cause, and that when the odor wears off the effect goes with it—in ten or twelve hours. It is very volatile.'

"I was just about to question him

further, for I was uneasy in my mind, when there came a call for Thornton, and I let him go.

"It was about nine that night, and having finished my turn, I was standing smoking near the main entrance to the tent when I heard a scream. Before I could think twice it was followed by a roar, and I recognized Nero's voice. I had been long enough with circuses to recognize that note when I heard it. It meant a kill, and I jumped for the entrance. Before I had gone twenty feet there was an uproar of screams that were deafening, and I was caught in a maelstrom of people that swept me backward like a chip.

"Women were screaming, and men were cursing and fighting. I thought at first that Nero had got loose and had attacked the crowd. With an effort I broke out at one side of the crowd and doubled back under the flap of the tent. It was dark at the back of the seats and I did not know where I was going for a minute until I found myself on my hands and knees, and crawling. I believed Minnie had been caught, I think, though I had no very clear idea, save a blind instinct to get close to her.

"As I stood up in the light, Hawkins, the elephant man, ran into me.

"What is it?" I yelled, catching him by the coat. In the light his face was deadly white.

"Rousseau!" he gasped. "They got 'im down! My Gawd, it's orful! Give us your gun!"

"I pushed him away from me and ran for the ring, pulling my revolver out as I went. It was awful. The crowd was simply mad, and struggling in the narrow entrance way, and there were the most fearful sounds from the lion cage. Some one caught me as I ran. It was Macklin.

"No good!" he screamed. "He's gone! Torn into ribbons! They got him down and—"

"He shuddered convulsively, and collapsed upon the sawdust. I watched him roll over twice, and went on. There was a cursing group of keepers about

the cage, and they were jabbing viciously with the irons. To one side stood Minnie with a face like death, clad in her blue tights. Her eyes were wide open, but her lips smiled. She turned to me, and if I live to be a thousand—"

The old man stopped with trembling finger outstretched, and he was swallowing hard. The blood had mounted to his face. Then he went on with an effort.

"'He'll never beat me again, Jim,' she croaked, as I reached her. 'As long as I live he'll never lay another hand on me! Never!' Her voice rose to an hysterical shriek.

"'Hush, for God's sake!' I begged her, and then Thornton came shambling up. His eyes were starting with horror, and he gabbled at her meaninglessly.

"'You didn't—forget—to put—that—on—his—'" he began chokingly, and she looked him in the eyes.

"'No,' she said. 'I didn't—forget.' And fell over in a dead faint. Then I picked her up in my arms and—"

His voice faded out, and he sat silently with his hand before his eyes. I waited some time for him to go on, and finally touched him on the arm. He turned to me quickly, and I could see moisture in his eyes. The moon had come up, large and yellow over the tree-tops, and the breeze just faintly rustled the leaves of the vine at our backs. He held out his hand to me.

"Do you judge her?" he asked hoarsely. "Has any man the right to condemn her?"

"God forbid!" I answered him slowly. "Did she die?" I asked gently after a time.

He did not answer me directly, but arose and opened the little door.

"Come out, dear," he said softly. "He is going now. He understands."

When I looked back from the corner I could see them in the dim light standing together on the step. He had his arm about her.



Goundinganting

Owen Oliver



OU have been tried and found wanting," the nurse said, when she sent me away yesterday. I knew that; but I thought I had tried very hard and done my best.

I did not argue with her because she would never see things my way. She is very clever, and perhaps she is very good. I am not at all clever, and, of course I am not as good as I ought to be. Perhaps I am not good at all, and sometimes I think that I should have tried harder. That is what worries and worries. I keep turning it over in my mind; and I feel weak and poorly, and my brain is in a muddle, and I can't feel sure about it. If mother were alive I should tell her, and she would understand. She always did. I understood myself better after I had told her things; and I think perhaps I shall know if I have been a wicked girl, if I write down what I want to tell mother.

Mother knew me, of course; but I am not sure that I know myself. So I shall put down first what I am, and try to be very honest.

I was eighteen when I became engaged to Major Gray, and eighteen is not very old. I looked like an absurd child who had put her hair up in play; and I look rather like that now, though I am nineteen. I did not feel very grown up. I used to keep chocolates

in my pocket, and talk to the dog and the kitten, and I was still afraid of my old schoolmistresses; not really afraid, but awed, like I used to feel when I went to school. I was fond of finery, and was a little vain, because people said that I was pretty. I was not thoroughly vain, because I was not satisfied with my nose; but I thought my eyes were good and my complexion, and if there was a little freckle I fidgeted about it. I was fond of boys, but I pretended that I wasn't. I fancied that I sang and played nicely, but I didn't let people know what I fancied. I always wanted to be taken notice of, and if I wasn't I sulked to myself. My temper was not bad, but it ought to have been better.

I was rather stupid, but when I did not understand things I smiled and nodded, as if I did, so people did not always find me out. I thought a great deal too much of my own pleasure, but I was not selfish or unkind, if I knew it. I always told the truth, because mother taught me to. I wanted mother's help; wanted it very much. I was not nearly clever enough to settle things for myself, but I had to, because Great-aunt Mary was very old. I lived with her after father and mother died; and we lived alone, unless you counted the servants.

Major Gray seemed to settle everything for me, and I was glad to have some one to do it. He said that I loved him, and I believed it. He was a splendid man; and he is. The nurse thinks

that I did not appreciate him, but I did; and I do. When I said that he settled things for me, I did not mean that he settled them his own way, but the way that he thought I should like. He was very unselfish, and very, very kind. No words are too good for him. I do mean that.

When I was engaged to him I did not flirt, but I liked people to like me; and Teddie Armstrong was such a dear boy, and so handsome and big and strong. He wasn't serious like Major Gray, and we had always been friends, and I never thought of not being. I don't want to make excuses for myself, only to be fair. It was such hard work being grown up; and Teddie would play silly games and do silly things, and I liked doing them. I was not really a woman, only pretended to be.

One afternoon Teddie and I were doing ridiculous things, and we began playing "hot hands." You put your hands together, and the one underneath tries to slap the other; and I cheated and held one of his; and then he held both of mine, to punish me. When he had held them for a few seconds, he caught his breath and looked at me; and I seemed to grow up, just in that moment, and began to tremble.

"Oh, Mab!" he said, and his voice was funny and hoarse.

"Oh, Teddie!" I cried. "Oh, Teddie!"

"Didn't you know?" he asked.

"No," I said. "I *didn't* know!"

"And now you do," he told me.

"Yes," I said. "Now I know." My voice was funny, too.

I knew that I loved Teddie as much as it was possible to love any one, and that I could give my life for him, though I am a coward; but, of course, any ordinary girl would, if she loved a man. Mother wouldn't have been surprised at that.

"And now you do?" he said again; only this time he put it like a question.

"And now I do," I said. "I cannot marry Major Gray."

I suppose that was wrong, because I had promised and he was very fond of me; but what is the use of saying that

you ought to do things, if you can't? I could give up Teddie, if it was right; but I couldn't help loving him, if it was ever so wrong; and whether I gave him up or didn't, and even if I hadn't loved him, I could not marry a man when I knew that I did not love him. I don't think that was either "right" or "wrong." It was just impossible. I am like that. The nurse does not understand me. Mother did. I thought that Major Gray would. I want to put down again that he is a very, very good man. Anyhow I felt sure that I ought to tell him.

Teddie didn't feel so sure about it. He said that *he* wasn't bound to Major Gray, and was at liberty to win me if he could; but *I* was engaged to him. I told him that I should tell Major Gray the truth and ask him to release me. I think I was right. Of course you always think it right to do what you want to do; but even nurse never said that it would have been wrong. And, if she saw anything wrong in me, she always told me. She would say it was wrong, if she knew that Teddie and I kissed each other. I think that wasn't "right" or "wrong" either, but unavoidable. It was only once.

I went to meet Major Gray as I had promised. I felt much braver than I should have though about telling him. Love makes even a silly girl brave.

He did not come. When I went home to Aunt Mary's I heard that he had met with a bad accident hunting. They said that he would be a cripple for life. That made me like him more; and, if I had not loved Teddie, perhaps it would have made me love him. But I *did* love Teddie. Nothing can ever alter that.

Teddie came to see me directly afterward. He held me in his arms, and his eyes were wet. I had *never* known him cry, not even when he was a tiny little boy and got hurt ever so badly.

"God help you, Mab!" he said. "My little Queen Mab! You can't give him up now. He's such—such a splendid chap. I've only come to say good-by."

He kissed me, and then he went; and then I fainted.

Now I am going to put down the worst thing. I am ashamed of it, and I think even mother would be ashamed of me. I knew that I ought to be faithful to Major Gray now; but I couldn't have been, and I shouldn't have been, if Teddie had not said that I must be.

He went right away from the town the next day. I fainted several times, and my head always ached, and Aunt Mary had the doctor to me for three days. Then I was able to go out again. I looked like a ghost, and when my hair was down, it seemed as if I couldn't be more than sixteen. People were very kind to me. They thought that I was broken-hearted about Major Gray. Aunt Mary thought so, and she was angry that they did not send for me to go and see him, and went to speak to his mother about it, though she never goes out, except once a year to the cemetery, where uncle is buried. She is eighty-two, and she thinks more about things that used to be than things that happen now. She tried to comfort me, but, of course, she did not understand, and I did not tell her because she is too old to be worried.

It was the nurse who would not let me go. She ruled the doctors and every one, aunt said. She was the assistant matron at a big hospital, and wrote books on nursing, and was considered very clever. She was too important to go out nursing, but she came to nurse Major Gray because he was an old friend. She was very big and stern-looking and handsome. Her voice was nice, and it sounded like music when she spoke to Major Gray; but she did not say nice things to me. I did not like her when I saw her.

That was a fortnight afterward. Major Gray's leg and arm were better, and they said that he would not be a cripple, after all; but the cut in his head made him delirious, and they could not quiet him. He kept crying out for "Baby Mab"—that was what he called me, and I shall never let any one else call me that, not even Teddie. The nurse said there was a chance that I might quiet him; and if I didn't he would die. So they sent for me.

I went into her room first, and she looked at me for a long time, with her mouth set in a straight line. Her eyes seemed to pierce through me, and see right into my mind.

"You are the anchor that holds him to life," she said at last. "I fear a very frail one. Do you love him, child?"

I did not answer; and she stared at me again; and I could see that she was very angry.

"You love some one else," she told me.

"Yes," I said.

"And you are engaged to him; and he is struggling for life; and calling for you!" She looked at me again; and I told her about Teddie, and how it happened, and how I was going to tell Major Gray the afternoon when his accident happened.

"He will die if he finds out that you do not care for him," she warned me. "Do you think you can make him believe that you do?"

"I do not know," I said.

"Are you going to try?"

"Yes," I told her.

"Is that just a word? Or do you really mean it?"

"I mean it," I said.

"And afterward? Do you mean to marry him?"

"If I can," I said. "Oh, yes! If I can!"

"If you can!" She looked at me as if I was some crawling thing. "I presume you have some idea of honor."

"Teddie says that I ought to," I told her. "He is my idea of honor."

"Perhaps you prefer to let him die?" she suggested. "Then you can be happy with—your idea of honor!"

I drew myself up and walked past her into the sick room. I sat down beside the poor, poor fellow and held his hand and talked softly to him and said nice things, and asked him if he did not know "Baby Mab." Twice I kissed his forehead. I did like him as I should have liked a brother, if I had had one. I wish I had. When he knew me and wanted to kiss me I let him; and once I kissed him. I couldn't have done it, if I hadn't said

to myself that I was Teddie's soldier, doing what Teddie thought was right. I think that is what weak women like me are made for; to be some one's soldier. They can be brave then.

I thought I was, but the nurse didn't. She was always telling me that he would find out that I did not care for him as soon as his mind was clearer. "It's no use thinking that you can go on pretending for years," she said. "You must really love him. You must make yourself love him."

"I can't," I said.

"You don't try," she told me.

"No," I said.

"And you won't?"

"And I won't," I answered. "I love Teddie, and no one else; just as you love him."

I looked at her, but she did not flush or flinch.

"Not like that, I think," she answered very quietly.

"No," I said, "not like that. You want me to marry him!"

"Because he wants you," she said, "baby-face!"

Any one could tell from the way she spoke that she hated me. I did not hate her. It was not my fault. I cannot hate people.

"Yes," I agreed. "I am childish; but not about Teddie. If he wanted some one else I should want her to marry him; but perhaps she couldn't. That is how I feel."

"Feel!" she cried. "You! Would you like to know how some people feel? If I could tear my heart in little pieces and give them one by one for him I would do it."

"Or mine?" I asked; and she laughed. It was a laugh that sounded very cruel.

"Your heart will soon mend," she said. "I don't reckon you!"

"I don't reckon you," I told her, "and I try not to reckon myself. I try to reckon Major Gray, and I ought to, but— It is Teddie that I reckon, really. He thinks that I am bound to marry Major Gray. So I shall—if I can. I don't know if I can."

8

"You have no honor," she declared.

"I have," I said, "but I have more love. You don't understand."

"Thank Heaven!" she answered.

We sat without speaking for a long time. She buried her face in her hands and rocked to and fro. I was sorry for her. I should have tried to comfort her, if I had dared. Sometimes I think she would have been kinder to me, if I had gone and put my arms round her; but I was so afraid of her. Presently he called out: "Mab! Baby Mab!" I went in and sat beside him, and put my arm under his head. I did try. Mother would think I did.

He became quite sensible after a week, and then it was worse, because he was so fond of me. I kept on trying for a whole week more; and sometimes when I went to bed I prayed that I might die in the night. That was wicked, of course. I know that I am not good.

One day when he was well enough to be propped up with pillows he was very quiet. He kept looking at me; and at last he slipped his arm through mine.

"Baby Mab," he said, "you 'gang like a ghast,' and you 'hae nae care to spin.' Am I Auld Robin Gray, dear?"

I tried to say "no." I did try. But the word would not come. I watched his pale face turn paler; and I felt too bad to cry, till he took my hands. Then I cried quietly.

"Poor little girl!" he said. "Poor little Mab! What a brave little soul you have been."

I knew that my bravery was only Teddie's; but I did not say so, because it would hurt him. He drew my hands against his face, and I did not mind his doing it. I knew that he would be good to me.

"Dear," he said, "I think you can trust me."

"I can trust you," I said. "I will tell you; and then I will do what you tell me. You are not Auld Robin Gray. You are—my dear big brother! In that way I love you; and I shall love you always. It is Teddie Armstrong. We were always friends, when

we were ever so little. I did not understand till the afternoon when you were hurt. It was before we knew that. Afterward he said that I was bound to you. I am, dear."

"Then, if you are bound to me," he said, and he tried to smile, "I can dispose of you. I will give you away, like a nice big brother. I hope you will be happy with him, dear little Baby Mab. He is a good fellow. Go and be happy, dear. I shall expect to see some roses in that poor little pale face by the time I get out. I shall be brave enough to meet you then. God bless you, Mab, Baby Mab! You have been very loyal and kind."

It hurt me so much when he praised me that it could not make the hurt any worse when the nurse blamed me.

I sat still for nearly a minute. Then he kissed my hands.

"Good-by for a few days, dear," he said. "It is best. Good-by."

"I—I am not clever, dear," I said. "I cannot say things. I—" I put both arms round him and kissed him. "That is what I mean," I said; and then I went.

The nurse knew as soon as she saw me. She gritted her teeth, and pointed

to the door, and moved aside as if she feared that I might touch her.

"I have tried," I pleaded. "Oh, I have tried!"

"You have been tried," she said, "and found wanting. Go!"

When I got home I wrote to Teddie. The letter was all smudges. I could not think what to say except this.

TEDDIE, DEAR: I did try, but he found out. He has released me. Don't be cross or I shall die. MAR.

He telegraphed this morning that he is coming "to claim his own." I am his, of course; and I want him to claim me. I wonder if he would if he knew just what I am.

The nurse thinks that I have no idea of honor; but I could not be dishonorable to Teddie. He *shall* know what I am. He shall read every word that I have written here; the part about my silliness, and conceit, and vanity; everything! Then he shall judge if I am good enough to marry him.

Teddie, dear, I know that I have been tried and found wanting. I am afraid that other people will find me wanting very often. I am not clever, and I am not good. But I should never fail you! Will you believe that, dear?



ON THE MOUNTAIN

THE top o' the world and an empty morning,
Mist sweeping in from the dim Outside,
The door of day just a little bit open—
The wind's great laugh as he flings it wide!

O wind, here's one who would travel with you
To the far bourne you alone may know—
There would I seek what some one is hiding,
There would I find where my longings go!

To some deep calm would I drift and nestle
Close to the heart of the Great Surprise.
O strong wind, do you laugh to see us?
We are so little and oh, so wise!

ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY.



JONAS BURTON'S WILL

—BY—
GERTRUDE
WARDEN



HE clerk at the Liverpool telegraph office was only human, and peered with some interest at the sender of the following unusual message:

To Jonas Burton, Seventy-two Store Street,
Chicago, U. S. America.

Please cable our solicitor Bridges that you are dead, leaving eighty thousand pounds to mother. Give lawyer's address and ask eldest daughter to come out and settle things. Will make it worth your while.
S. S.

There was nothing arresting about the girl's exterior.

She was not pretty, she was not plain; she was not short, she was not tall. She was dressed in black, and wore one of the hats fashionable at the moment, of "cloche" or pudding-basin shape, which concealed her hair and the upper part of her face.

She was apparently young, and her voice and accent proclaimed her an English lady.

"Name and address of the sender," the clerk suggested.

"Not necessary," returned the lady.

She left the office, which was in a busy thoroughfare, near the docks, and entering a stationer's shop she gave an order for ladies' visiting cards:

"Mrs. Trevor Cavendish, The Hall, Penmore, Lancashire; Miss Trevor Cavendish; Miss Lilian Trevor Cavendish; and Mrs. Jonas Burton; black edges to all, and the last with a deep black edge."

After paying a small sum on account, as she gave no address, the

young lady left the shop and paused outside in the street to reflect.

It was a chilly afternoon in October. A wet fog hung on the air, and wayfarers hurried toward their destinations in dread of coming rain. But the young lady in black was so absorbed in her meditations that she hardly noted the weather.

She had a pair of singularly bright gray eyes, the effect of which was impaired by the fairness of her long eyelashes. Any one seeing her stand, lost in thought in the muddy street, might have supposed from her youth that her mind was occupied with thoughts of a possible "him."

She was indeed thinking of a man; but his personality was unknown to her.

"I can't get through this business single-handed," she was considering, "I must have a man to help. A good all-round man as chauffeur, office boy, trustee—everything. He will want to get more than his share, and he will have to be dropped sooner or later. But for a time he must be trusted—more or less. He can't have any principles, and yet I don't want a criminal. Crime is silly; it means being found out. I want a sort of civilized Friday, who would work for my interests and not ask questions. Up to now, luck has been on my side; I must trust to it to produce the man I require."

As she spoke, she half-unconsciously turned a ring she wore upon the little finger of her left hand. It was a ring she had picked up in the street on her twenty-first birthday and worn from that date, a gold circlet in which was

set a yellow stone engraved with a scarabaeus.

Sylvia Sligh, as this young lady was christened, although she questioned a good many things, never doubted the lucky powers of this amulet.

At the moment when she turned it on her finger, a man, shabbily dressed, and staggering in his walk, dashed out of the door of a public house and cannoned roughly against her. At first Sylvia imagined that his motive was robbery. The street was dark and deserted, the rain was beginning to fall, and the lamps were not yet lit. Sylvia's fingers flew to the pocket of her jacket, in which reposed a policeman's whistle and a revolver. Then the look in the man's face arrested her attention and made her withdraw her hand.

Brought up sharply by the impact with her light, wiry frame, the man stood for a few seconds swaying on his feet and staring stupidly before him.

The light from a gas lamp over the public house fell full upon his face. Sylvia Sligh, who already at four and twenty was beginning to study closely the physiognomies of her fellow creatures, read in his as clearly as though it were a printed book his destiny.

The man was half drunk, half starved, and wholly desperate. His face, which was disfigured by a rough growth of beard, would have been, she judged, good-looking under happier circumstances, if weak of purpose. The shortness of his hair, for the man was hatless, pointed to a recent sojourn as a guest of his majesty; jailbird, failure, was written all over him; yet Sylvia Sligh felt this was the tool she needed.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked, laying her gloved fingers lightly on his dirty sleeve.

He answered with an oath, and flung off her touch. Then, pushing past her, he walked with rapid if uncertain steps in the direction of the river.

She deliberately followed him through the unsavory neighborhood into which he plunged in a short cut to the landing stage. Liverpool was well known to her, and for that reason

she had brought her family to a hotel in the town when her father's ruin and suicide made it necessary for the Slighs to leave Streatham. Mrs. Sligh's parents, the Burtons, had lived near Liverpool; they had been dead for some years; but Sylvia deemed it better to move to a town familiar to her. She therefore knew in which direction her chase of the hatless man was taking her, and was no whit surprised when she and he both stood upon the wooden planks, slippery with the fast-falling rain, sloping down to the water.

A policeman strode past, clapping his arms together. As soon as his heavy footsteps became inaudible, the hatless man, who had been leaning over the chain gazing down into the water, tore off his coat and flung it below; then, seizing the chain with his hand, he was about to follow the coat when he felt himself clutched and dragged into security by the strong arms of a woman.

For an instant the unexpectedness of his rescue stunned him. Then he broke into a volley of curses and struck out violently. The cold touch of the muzzle of a revolver against his brow stopped his words and his struggles.

"Be quiet, you ungrateful idiot!"

The words were harsh, but the voice was sympathetic and refined.

"Do you think I care if you shoot me?" the man inquired, staring up at her stupidly. "Why, I was going to drown myself. And I will, too, damn it!"

He tried to wrench himself free, but found that he was being helped to his feet in a determined fashion.

"Stand up like a man and leave off that disgusting swearing!" said the lady. "I know it is hard to have 'jailbird' thrown at you, and not to be able to get work—especially if one has others dependent upon one."

This was a chance shot. But Sylvia guessed from his weak mouth that this man would have "incumbrances."

"How do you know?" he cut in hoarsely. "And who are you? And what business is it of yours?"

"I am a fellow creature," she answered, taking his arm and making him

move away from the water. "And I have been worried for money myself. So that I understand the temptations."

The effect of the brandy the man had taken to nerve him for self-destruction was beginning to pass away.

"What did I do?" he broke out. "Borrow a little petty cash once and again from the drawer after backing a wrong 'un. And they were mean enough to mark it! And I, with my wife dead not six months, and two children to keep! The fellow who employed me and who got me nabbed is one of the biggest thieves in London. There's no justice in this world. I want to get out of it. Why can't you let me?"

"You haven't any right to, with two children to keep. Pull yourself together and trust to me. I will find work for you."

"Are you one of the psalm-singing missionary lot?" he asked, staring at her with dull suspicion.

"No. I am a worker like yourself, and have to keep my family. You are a London man, I can tell from your voice. Did this accident happen in London?"

"Yes."

"Can you drive a motor car?"

"Yes. No job I'm so keen on."

"If I give you sufficient pay to keep you and your children properly, will you enter my service and do just what I tell you without asking questions?"

The man hesitated a moment. But something in the clear steadfastness of her gray eyes compelled him to agree.

"It's a queer start," he said. "But you seem to mean well by me, and I will!"

"That's a bargain!" said Sylvia Sligh, giving him a firm little hand to shake. "What is your name?"

"Alfred Somers."

"Mine," she said, "is Trevor Cavendish. You will call me Miss Cavendish. Now, Alfred, the first thing to do is to get you a hat and coat and some food and a respectable lodging. You will begin your duties to-morrow morning."

Two hours later, warmed, fed,

clothed, comforted, and encouraged, Alfred Somers parted from his new employer at the door of his lodgings.

"God bless you for coming to save me, Miss Cavendish!" he said. "There isn't much I wouldn't do for you!"

"That is just the frame of mind I wanted him to be in," Sylvia Sligh reflected as she sprang into a cab and drove to the hotel where her mother and sister were staying, arriving half an hour late for dinner.

Two days after the meeting between Sylvia Sligh and Alfred Somers, Lilian Sligh, a pretty, delicate-looking, fair girl of seventeen, rushed into her elder sister's room, brandishing a cablegram.

"Sylvia, darling!" she cried. "Such great news! We seem to have one slice of luck upon another! Uncle Jonas is dead——"

"Is that what you call good news?" inquired Sylvia, with gentle reproach.

"Of course not! I am so sorry! But we haven't seen Uncle Jonas for four years, and it appears he has made a fortune and died and left it all to mother! The lawyer wants you to go out to Chicago to see about it."

Sylvia took the cablegram and regarded it thoughtfully.

"Mr. Bridges sends it on, I see," she remarked. "So he evidently thinks there's something in it."

"Of course, there's something in it. Won't it be splendid to be well off again, and able to pay for things without cheating father's creditors? I suppose we shall soon call ourselves by our proper name, Sligh, again? I feel like an impostor, when people call me Trevor Cavendish."

"That is silly of you, dear. After such a thing as happened to us a new name *had* to be taken. I have even entered the boys at St. Paul's Preparatory School and at the master's house where they live as Trevor Cavendish. It would not be fair on them to use the old name. The boys would make them feel it; schoolboys can be brutes to each other. Dick and Eddie don't mind changing their names, so why should you? As to father's creditors, they

have seized our furniture at Streatham—”

“But you sent the best things away in the night, didn't you?” asked Lilian.

Sylvia began to wish that her sister were less observant. But she smoothed the girl's hair in a motherly fashion, and advised her to trust to her and not question her arrangements, and the sisters went to congratulate their mother.

Mrs. Sligh, a handsome, massive woman of feeble health and character, was radiant, but tearful.

“I never should have thought my brother Jonas had it in him to make a fortune,” she said. “He was such a rolling stone; but you, Sylvia, always took his part.”

“He had a fine sense of humor,” Sylvia observed. “I see that Mr. Bridges suggests in his letter that I should run up to London to consult with him. I think he should come here; it will look better. And you can mention, mother, to your new acquaintances, the Wilmots, that Mr. Bridges is our family lawyer, and that he is coming to see you about this splendid legacy.”

“May I tell them?” asked Mrs. Sligh. “I have been half afraid of talking to them lest I should let something slip I ought not to.”

“It's only bad news one need keep quiet about,” her daughter said. “Luckily, you can show the cablegram, as it calls you Jonas Burton's only sister Elizabeth, and does not mention the name of Sligh. Wills often take a year to settle, and this one means a journey to America. Mr. Bridges will have to raise some money on your expectations. Meantime, there is your Aunt Hannah Burton. Doesn't she live not far from here, and isn't she rich?”

“It's an hour's journey by rail,” her mother replied. “Aunt Hannah is very close-fisted, and has never been known to help anybody—”

“You and I will go and see her and show her the cablegram, and offer her ten per cent. on five hundred pounds for a year,” Sylvia returned promptly.

The news of the good fortune which had befallen the Trevor Cavendishes spread quickly over the Princess' Ho-

tel. They were such gentle-mannered, well-bred women, and so courteous to strangers, in spite of their reserve, that much interest was taken in them. During the fortnight they had spent in the hotel their bills had not been paid, as the elder Miss Trevor Cavendish was waiting for a check from the agent for her property in the south of England.

So at least she had told the manager, who was duly glad when he heard of the lucky cablegram.

The visit of Mr. Bridges increased the manager's confidence. Mr. Bridges looked as solidly respectable a man of the law as the Trevor Cavendishes looked irreproachable English ladies.

Mrs. Wilmot, a jolly, bustling hotel acquaintance, was introduced by Sylvia to Mr. Bridges, and confided to him her liking for “those delightful Trevor Cavendishes,” and her joy over their good news.

Mr. Bridges, who approved of the temporary change of name after Mr. Sligh's distressing suicide, agreed with Mrs. Wilmot that they were “very nice people, who deserved any sort of good fortune.” But he was not oversanguine when alone with his clients.

“Chicago is a long way off,” he remarked. “Details must be given by letter from this American lawyer before any steps can be taken. Had you any idea that your brother was a person of means?”

“None at all,” Mrs. Sligh replied. “Jonas was always risking the very little money he had in what my husband used to call wild-cat schemes. He borrowed money of us again and again. He always swore he would pay us back—”

“And he has, you see,” put in Sylvia. “I myself always believed in Uncle Jonas.”

This testimony from the most intelligent member of the family was not without weight upon Mr. Bridges. But he explained the difficulty of procuring an advance of money on such ill-defined expectations.

“We must write for details,” he declared.

Other people were more easily satisfied.

Mrs. Wilmot, to whom Sylvia talked confidentially that evening, commended her for her "pluck" when she announced her intention of going out to Chicago. Mrs. Wilmot had four sons, and in their interest she was always nice and motherly to ladylike girls with suitable "portions."

"If I can help you over the first expenses, my dear," she said expansively to Sylvia, "you just let me know. Lawyers are always so slow in paying out money after deaths."

Sylvia protested that she could not "for worlds" take advantage of her kindness. But she ended by borrowing a hundred pounds "at ten per cent. interest for a year," in order to pay her expenses to Chicago and back.

Aunt Hannah proved a trump card. She was nearly eighty, a harsh-featured old maid, living in a dilapidated terrace house in a dull Lancastrian town; but her old eyes grew brighter at sight of the cablegram, and at the sound of the magic words, "ten per cent."

Sylvia played her part deftly, impressing her great-aunt by her modesty and good sense; as a result of her efforts she and her mother returned to Liverpool with five hundred pounds of Aunt Hannah's savings to help in financing the family until Uncle Jonas' money became theirs to spend.

The next morning a smart motor car drew up before the Princess' Hotel.

The chauffeur was a good-looking, clean-shaven young man, with very closely-cut black hair, shifty blue eyes, and a weak mouth.

Sylvia Sligh, who was on the lookout, exchanged a few words with him, and then sought out her mother and sister.

"Aunt Hannah has sent an invitation for us all three to spend a night or two at her house," she explained. "We can't refuse after she has lent us that money. She has borrowed the motor car of a friend for us. There's plenty of room for luggage, so take your best things, Lilian, and your little

silver odds and ends. Aunt Hannah is mean; but she likes other people to splash money about. I'll tell the manager we are going to a relative for the night."

Once outside Liverpool, Alfred Somers, as the chauffeur was called, followed a route that puzzled even the unobservant Mrs. Sligh.

They had left the Princess' Hotel at ten o'clock, and it was not until after one that, after traversing many miles of scattered villages and open country, the car drew up before the gates of a substantially built residence of white stone, set in a well-wooded inclosure.

A porter's lodge by the entrance contained a garage. Alfred Somers sprang down, flung open the gates, and drove up to the house.

"Mercy on us!" cried Mrs. Sligh in dismay. "This isn't Aunt Hannah's. Where in the world has the man taken us?"

Sylvia laughed as she descended from the car.

"Don't worry, mater, dear," she said. "This is your new home, The Hall, Penmore, Lancashire. I have taken it furnished for a term of years, so that I shall know you are thoroughly comfortable while I am in America."

"But your Aunt Hannah!" gasped Mrs. Sligh. "And the car, and the chauffeur!"

"Aunt Hannah knows nothing about it, and the car and the chauffeur are mine. Somers will live in the lodge when I don't want him in Liverpool."

"But the people in the hotel—" began Lilian.

"Of course I shall send and pay the bill," Sylvia declared. "We haven't left much, and I don't want to have things sent on. The fact is it had slipped out that we were poor papa's daughters, and we should have had a most unpleasant time. So I knew it was best to make a fresh start."

"Sylvia is wonderfully clever!" Mrs. Sligh observed to her younger daughter, after she had enjoyed an excellent early dinner. "How well she has managed everything!"

"She is wonderful," Lilian admitted

thoughtfully. "But I sometimes wonder if she is not almost *too* clever?"

Miss Sylvia Sligh sat at a desk in an office in Liverpool, adding up figures.

"Aunt Hannah, five hundred; Mrs. Wilmot, one hundred; Mr. Bridges, twenty-five; six hundred and twenty-five pounds! That is all Uncle Jonas has earned for me so far; a mere trifle. We shall see if this little bait brings in something more respectable!"

She drew from a drawer and read over an advertisement she had caused to be inserted in a Liverpool daily paper.

Young widow, twenty-five, nice appearance, to whom ranch in America has been left, is anxious to meet honorable and wealthy man of business to help in developing estate. Negotiations with a view to marriage might be entertained. Middle age not objected to. Good disposition, refined education, and church principles insisted on. Strictest confidence. Write, enclosing photograph. Mrs. J. B., Box X. Z., *Daily Northern Express*.

So far, Sylvia's plans had gone smoothly. Her mother and sister were comfortably settled at the Hall, Penmore, in a thoroughly out-of-the-way district. Three good servants had been engaged to wait upon them, and Sylvia motored over from Liverpool every two or three days to look after them. Meantime, she had rented an unpretentious ground floor in the business quarter of the town, which she had fitted up as outer and inner office, bedroom and dressing room. The charm about the place for her lay in the fact that it possessed more than one means of approach and exit, there being a front door on the street and a back door on a yard and side street.

Alfred Somers was working well. So long as Sylvia could keep him under her eye she could depend upon him. Drink and gambling were his two weaknesses; but the moral influence she had over him was immense. He was a man easily led by a woman, and he had never before met a really clever one. For Sylvia he had a superstitious reverence. He was also lead-

ing the life he liked best, one of adventure, excitement, and open-air movement.

He made his appearance presently with a bunch of letters he had collected, answers to the "young widow" advertisement.

Sylvia opened and studied them, and placed the photographs enclosed in a row before her. There were eight, and from among them, after close scrutiny, she chose three.

The rejected ones she dismissed with critical comments.

"This man has answered for a 'lark'; this one is an adventurer, look at his cunning eyes; this man is a journalist in search of copy, and probably this is not his own photograph at all; I know by the way in which he words his letter. This young one with the mustache has no money; if he had, he would spend it at once—look at his wide nostrils and loose-lipped mouth. As to this thin-faced old man, he is so mean and so suspicious one could neither hoodwink him nor get anything out of him. Those five are no good. But I believe a good deal may be done with these three. I particularly like the fact that one of them doesn't give his name, and wants his photograph returned at once. It shows that he is afraid of publicity, and being afraid of publicity is a very good sign in a man if one wants to get something out of him. Either he is a person of some importance in Liverpool, or he is married. Both, perhaps."

"If he is married, you can't marry him," suggested Somers, who was frequently puzzled by Sylvia's tactics.

"That would be a pity, wouldn't it?" returned Miss Sligh.

The portrait of the anonymous correspondent represented a broadly built uncompromising-looking man of horsy aspect, and middle age. The features were roughly modeled, the jaw was square, the brow low and unimaginative. Not exactly an ill-looking man, but with some coarseness and brutality about the full-lipped mouth, shaded by a mustache and flanked by trimly cut whiskers.

The two other photographs chosen by Sylvia represented respectively Mr. Richard Prentiss, a retired contractor, aged sixty, who stated himself to be a widower without incumbrances, bored for want of occupation, and of ample means, and who was shown as a curly-headed, good-humored-looking man, with a multitude of chins, and Mr. Laurence Burnham, an old bachelor in the late fifties, dandified and distinguished looking, with wisps of hair drawn carefully over a bald pate, and a white mustache and beard very neatly arranged.

"These are the three who have the money," Sylvia decided as she proceeded to dictate to Alfred Somers on the typewriter three separate favorable answers to these gentlemen's requests for a personal interview.

Would Mr. Richard Prentiss call at this office at ten o'clock, a. m., as Mrs. Jonas Burton would be very glad to meet him?

Would Mr. Laurence Burnham be so kind as to call at this office at three o'clock, as Mrs. Jonas Burton has been favorably impressed by his most pleasing likeness and is anxious to make his acquaintance?

Would Mr. H. C. (whose photograph, returned with thanks, gives a strong idea of his intelligence and honorable qualities) kindly call at this office at seven p. m., as Mrs. Jonas Burton, who will be glad to know him, quite understands and shares his desire to avoid publicity?

Next day they came, they saw, and in different ways they were conquered.

By nine a. m. Sylvia was preparing Somers for the part of elderly secretary and distant relative. In a neat, iron-gray wig, tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles, and a coat and collar of old-fashioned cut, Somers became an ideal elderly and clerky friend.

"Remember," Sylvia impressed upon him, "that I am your second cousin, Mary, and that you have a wife and family, and that you are only looking after my affairs here at your office—you are an accountant—to oblige me, and that you think I ought to have a husband to take care of my interests, as my land is of no use without money to spend on it. You didn't know my husband, as I was married in America,

but he was sixty, and I have never cared about young men."

"I won't forget a thing."

Mr. Richard Prentiss proved a prodigiously fat little man, who wore a royal blue tie and smelt of whisky. He had already proposed to Alfred Somers that they should "go out and have a drink," when the inner door of the office opened and the "widow" appeared.

Somers could scarcely believe his eyes.

Was this radiant creature in the rustling silk-lined black crêpe gown and natty little Marie Stuart bonnet over glorious golden hair really his sober-looking employer?

Sylvia's gray eyes looked enormous under darkened eyelashes, her wholesome pink skin had been doctored until it was pale rose and white about a cherry-lipped mouth, and her waist had been compressed until it looked almost unnaturally small.

The make-up was so neatly applied that under a black tulle veil it was scarcely perceptible. Mr. Richard Prentiss, who was a soft-hearted, susceptible person, thought he had never seen any one so pretty in his life.

Mrs. Burton's little feminine ways completed his subjugation. Sylvia assumed an air of almost infantile ingenuousness. She produced a map of her property in Texas, and showed him a copy of her husband's will, which was simple:

Everything to Mary, my darling wife.

"If he had only left instructions how I was to manage things, it would have been all right," Sylvia said pathetically. "But just before he died he had sunk all his money in this great ranch and meant to look after it himself. And I haven't got a manager or anything. Then I got ill, and was sent back to England on a voyage for my health. But all my husband's people have died, and I was married at seventeen, and have been away eight years, so that I don't know anybody in England, except my mother's cousin, Mr. James Smithson here. And he"—Sylvia's voice

trembled—"doesn't seem to want to be bothered with me and my affairs. That's why I put that advertisement in the paper. I felt I must have some one to look after me!"

"My dear young lady, you are a great deal too pretty, if I may be allowed to say so, to look after yourself," Mr. Prentiss remarked gallantly.

Sylvia seemed charmed with the compliment, which led to others. Finally, after Mr. Prentiss had prosed for a couple of hours about his loneliness and his means and his regret that he had sold his business, he begged to be allowed to treat his new acquaintance to "a really nice lunch."

During the course of the meal, which was served in the best restaurant in the town, Mr. Prentiss imbibed a considerable amount of wine, and spirit, and liqueurs, and Sylvia had an anxious time watching over her "Cousin James Smithson" lest he should do the like. Over coffee Mr. Prentiss made her a definite if indistinctly worded offer of marriage, and insisted on driving off immediately afterward to a jeweler's in Bold Street, where Sylvia, under modest protest, allowed him to buy her an engagement ring of large diamonds which cost two hundred and fifty pounds.

It was extremely difficult to get rid of Mr. Prentiss, who had all his time on his hands. By a quarter to three, Sylvia and her "mother's cousin" were at length left by him at the door of the office under a solemn promise to spend the whole of the following day in his society.

A dozen of champagne, a huge box of chocolates, and a colossal bouquet arrived during the course of the afternoon from the impressionable contractor. But by the time they appeared, Sylvia was engaged with her second victim, Mr. Laurence Burnham.

Mr. Prentiss' table manners had been primitive, and his aspirates unreliable; but Mr. Burnham was the pink of dandified correctness in dress and bearing. He was, so Sylvia easily discovered, a mixture of shyness and vanity, weakness and suspicion. All his life he had

longed to marry, but he valued his own merits so highly that he had practically expected the women to propose to him, and when they had done all they could in that direction, Mr. Burnham had become alarmed and run away from them.

The refinement and the persuasive ways of the golden-haired widow delighted him; but he closely examined the papers connected with her ranch, and asked a multitude of questions. Finally, however, Sylvia's adroitly administered flattery during the tea to which he invited them charmed him out of his suspicious diffidence, and on the way home he let himself be lured into a jeweler's, at which he bought for his fascinating widow a pair of single-stud pearl earrings for eighty pounds, to replace the ugly jet drops in her pretty ears.

"And as soon as we are definitely engaged I will match them with a necklace for that lovely throat," the old beau said, with a bow, as he parted from his siren at the door of Mr. Smithson's office.

"H. C.," when he arrived punctually at seven, proved a person of very different calibre from the others, a tall, massively-built, imposing-looking man, with an abrupt manner, grizzled hair, and deep blue eyes.

From the moment when Sylvia, who was growing tired by the day's work and excitement, put her pale face, red lips, black-fringed eyes, and golden hair into the office, the big man, who was still in the forties, did not once remove his gaze from her.

At first she feared that he had detected the make-up; but in this she was wrong. The emotion which stirred "H. C." who was devoted to horses, flowers, and pretty women, and farmed many hundred acres of his own land, was genuine admiration for the slender widow with the soft voice and the brilliant eyes.

He wanted to get rid of Smithson's presence, and talk to Sylvia alone; but this he failed to achieve, and had to content himself with taking the pair of them out to dinner.

Sylvia's talk during the meal completed her conquest, and on the following morning she received a letter from "H. C." which almost touched her.

He gave his name this time, Harry Clumber, the squire of many acres and owner of valuable house property in Liverpool. But he admitted to the possession of a wife, who for ten years had been confined in a lunatic asylum, and who had been now for some months reported as dying. Under the circumstances, would Mrs. Jonas Burton sanction his visits?

Mrs. "Jonas Burton" was happy to sanction any visits which led to gifts; and during the following fortnight Sylvia and Alfred Somers led a life of extraordinary shifts and excitement, playing a game of hide-and-seek in their endeavors to prevent Messrs. Prentiss, Burnham, and Clumber from meeting each other and comparing notes.

Mr. Prentiss was humored and encouraged in his convivial moods to visit shops in Sylvia's society; Mr. Burnham was flattered into the belief that his vast merits were at length appreciated, and strongly complimented on his perfect taste in jewelry; and Mr. Clumber, who only called in the evenings, as he was a fairly well-known man, was led to believe that the love of a beautiful and refined woman was his at last.

Three deeds, giving over Mary Burton's vast estate in Texas to Messrs. Prentiss, Burnham, and Clumber respectively, were drawn out, and signed by Sylvia in her assumed name; the game grew increasingly difficult to play, as two of the three suitors clamored for an immediate marriage, and Harry Clumber wished to have his conditional engagement ratified by a kiss.

He took the kiss without permission as he parted from his "widow" one evening in the presence of her cousin. The door had no sooner closed upon him than Sylvia flew to wash her face,

tear off her golden wig and widow's weeds, and reassert her own individuality.

"Alfred," she cried, flying back into the office, "this is the end! I can't and won't play the game any longer! It is getting too risky. Go round to that man who offered to buy the furniture here. Tell him I will let him have it at the price he offered if he will clear it out to-night. I've only hired this place for a week more, and we'll send the key to the landlord by letter. I've got three diamond engagement rings, a pearl necklace, pearl earrings, a bracelet set with diamonds, a watch mounted in diamonds, a gold-mounted dressing bag, a set of sables, an ermine cape, a lace fan, a feather boa, a traveling clock, a grand piano, a white lace dress, an opera cloak, fifty pairs of white gloves. Mr. Prentiss' check for a thousand pounds, Mr. Burnham's for eight hundred, and Mr. Clumber's for five hundred—all the checks as part payment for my share of the splendid property left me by Jonas Burton! All these three men answered my advertisement because they wanted a little excitement in their middle-aged lives. Well, they have had it! It has been a grand, if expensive, fortnight for them, and it will be something for them to look back to.

"I could have gone on deceiving Mr. Prentiss, who drank till he was silly, and Mr. Burnham, who was so vain that one could make him believe anything. But Mr. Clumber was different. He was so much in earnest that I was growing afraid of him, and I dared not play with him a day longer. It is marvelous how much can be done with men by a widow's dress, a box of makeup, some sham title deeds, and a cartload of flattery!

"But I've played *that* game for all it is worth! To-night, Alfred, we must fly on the car back to the Hall, Penmore, and forget we ever knew Mr. James Smithson and the widow of Mr. Jonas Burton!"

ON THE VERANDA

By
Quentin M. Drake



HE fierce Philippine rains had come and gone, leaving new-washed foliage on the mountains that surrounded the U. S. Army post at Tarlaginan. Their going allowed the sun to come out once more and dry a crust over the plaza so hard that not even the hoofs of the cavalry horses would often break through it into the bottomless slough beneath; also to cover this crust with short, fine turf having roots so full of vitality that the feet of drilling men could wear no bare spots to disfigure it.

Yet there had not been much drill of late in Tarlaginan. In any case this would have happened; during the rains, when little or none was possible, the men naturally had become a trifle rusty. Very seldom, however, have enlisted men taken so kindly to drills. Therefore, these drills, though bound to be good where my old friend Redfield was in command, rarely indeed had gone with such snappy excellence as the one that we had been watching.

There was a reason for this. For some time we had been hearing rumors, generally accepted by us as facts, that internal troubles in China had reached such a point that interference was intended by a concert of powers, the United States among the rest, which then was in the process of organization. From Brigadier General Redfield him-

self down to the last-joined recruit none doubted for an instant that the men then present in the post, of all Uncle Sam's servants, were the best fitted to play his part in the concert when it should open. The thing was to convince Uncle Sam himself of this fact. And now it looked as though we were to have an opportunity.

According to the latest news, the inspector general himself was to visit us. Up to that time we never had received an officer from this department. Of course these visits are official secrets, supposed to be made without previous knowledge on the part of the recipients. We knew, nevertheless, from the time that it first was determined upon, that this one was impending; knew, even, between the uncertain limits of the little inter-island transport that was to bring our official guest, when to expect him.

Even the natives, who understood far better than we what was going on in China, managed to a great extent to overcome their hatred of the American soldiers in view of the fact that the activities of these soldiers, formerly so much dreaded by them, now were likely to be employed against the still more hated Chinaman. They came in swarms, lining the plaza and adding much to the picture as they made a sort of *fiesta* of these afternoons.

This festive spirit, in fact, seemed to pervade the entire community. The women of the post began to evince an

interest in all that went on as great as though they never before had seen a drill and were not in the habit of regulating their days by bugle calls almost as rigidly as did the men themselves. Those who inhabited quarters overlooking the plaza fell into the custom of giving tea there to their sisters who were less fortunate, so that all could sit and watch, and each drill took on many characteristics of a social function.

This day I myself was giving a tea. That is, we called it that, and tea was what my two feminine guests drank, but the others ran to whisky and tan-san largely. It was a particularly festive occasion. Two of my friends were invalids, now convalescent, and this was the first time they had been allowed by the doctors to leave their own domiciles.

There was Redfield himself, just recovering from a broken leg, and Brinsley, a major of cavalry, who had been shot by a thieving commissary sergeant whom he had caught in the act of assisting to defraud the government. There also was old Scott, the chief surgeon of the post, and Father Terence Clancy—physicians material and spiritual. Not, it is true, that any of the laymen there present were Roman Catholics, but nearly every one, irrespective of creed, loved old Father Terence.

Philly Redfield, now nearing her eighteenth birthday, was there, of course. I doubt if she would have allowed her grandfather, whose devoted nurse she had been, to appear at all without her. Though of course I never would have dreamed of leaving her out. All too soon both Redfield and I were to lose her, in a measure; that is, if she and one Thomas Pendale, a lieutenant of cavalry, had their way, and up to that time they had succeeded in getting it. The same sort of thing, almost, might be said of Helen James, who, though ten years Philly's senior, still was her friend, and who was to marry Brinsley.

The infantry was sprawling somewhere around on the sides of those

wooded hills, getting skirmish drill under conditions which actual service scarcely could render more uncomfortable. The field artillery was on a practice march, and the cavalry, therefore, had the plaza to itself. It had been a most satisfactory drill, and the eyes of old Redfield gladdened as he saw the men at it, for the regiment was his own, the one that for so many years he had commanded. It ended with a charge that was halted only by the edge of the plaza and the crowds of standing natives. As the line swung into column and trotted away, Redfield leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"The regiment doesn't seem to have fallen off much," said he. "It was well handled to-day."

"How can you say such a thing, Dad's Dad?" replied Philly unexpectedly. "The drill wasn't nearly as good as yesterday—or the day before. You know it wasn't!"

For a moment Redfield looked startled; then a light of understanding broke over his face. "You refer especially to B Troop, I suppose, my dear," he remarked, a kindly smile lighting up his lean, handsome face.

"It surely is remarkable how the absent av wan lieutenant boy will break up the drill av a whole rigimint, sometimes," agreed Father Terence, his fat sides shaking as he glanced at Philly. "Young Pendale's on guard, isn't he?"

Then we all laughed, and with the rich color flooding her dark cheeks, Philly laughed, too. But the laugh ended soon, and a sigh from Redfield followed it. The thought which caused that sigh was, I fancy, going through each of our minds at the time—that if this war for which all we men so longed really should come, it was to the last degree unlikely that this set of friends ever again could meet as we were doing that afternoon. There followed a pause that lasted far longer than pauses usually did with us. For we all, except Brinsley, were getting old, and to some of us at least the gathering years brought a tendency toward garrulity.

During the short interval between

the ending of the drill and dress parade, most of the native men drifted away to a spot just beyond the post confines where booths for the sale of edibles and liquor had been set up. The wives and daughters, however, remained, and turning their backs to the plaza stood watching another spectacle far more interesting to them. For then it was that the tea givers and their guests descended from their domiciles, and being joined by their husbands and brothers and sweethearts, walked slowly up and down the broad path of planks in front of Officer's Row, and the sound of chatter and gay laughter began to arise as one neighbor called greetings to another.

Old Scott bent forward as far as his abdominal protuberance would allow, and after looking over the scene before him, straightened again, puffingly.

"I don't suppose there's a soul in this place of Tarlaginan who is any too fond of it," said he. "That is, I would judge so if I went only by the talk I hear, and the silly curses that are called down upon it. Yet I'd not be afraid to make a small bet, if ever I indulged in such fool things, that when we're ordered out, and are once well away, some people will look back on the time here with regret—like fools, as they are."

"I'd like to make another small bet, if I could find a taker, which I couldn't," I added incautiously. "And that is that you'll be one of the very first to do that same thing."

Scott's face instantly became crimson.

"Why in the name of the sultry place to which you're bound, Drake, you see fit to talk like a double-dashed, braying old donkey in accusing me of such a fool thing, I can't imagine," he belittled. "But I can tell you, sir, that if you——"

I had started to bait Scott because it had got to be a habit with me, and he always seemed to expect it. But somehow on that day I did not feel like having one of our customary quarrels.

"I didn't accuse you of any fool thing, so far as I know," said I. "Most

of us become more or less attached, in spite of ourselves, to any place that we've labored so to improve. There's nothing foolish in that, so far as I can see."

Scott grunted a mollified assent. It always was easy to mollify that peppy old doctor; he and his little bursts of temper always put me in mind of a firecracker—one bang and then all over.

"There certainly have been changes in this place since first we came to it," said he meditatively. "As you say, we've all had a hand in it. What we—the pill men—have done doesn't show on the surface much; sanitation never does. But it's there, just the same."

Another silence descended upon us, during which I sat looking out over the scene as it stretched away from the convent veranda, where we were sitting. As Scott said, great changes certainly had taken place in Tarlaginan since first we came there. We had found the plaza a jungle of weeds, surrounded by an unkempt village of rickety huts, the two greater buildings, the convent and *presidencia*, even more dilapidated than the rest. Opposite them stood a gallows, painted red and in constant use. The removal of this gallows was the first reform, and after it the others followed rapidly.

The place soon became as I saw it then, as green and trim as a par'. Board walks had been laid along the four roads that bounded the plaza, an' the spaces on each side of them had been made into a line of beds that fairly glowed with the many blossoming shrubs which that fertile country so lavishly produces. These beds had been largely Philly's doing. With a gang of Filipino prisoners detailed for the purpose, and one of my sergeants acting as a foreman, she had worked over them indefatigably, and despite all obstacles, the results were admirable. It was like the child to persevere as she had done. I knew that in the beginning, at least, the maintenance of these dainty gardens of hers had cost quite as much trouble as their installation.

"Are those flowers of yours as popular as ever for cow fodder, Philly?" I

asked. "Or have you managed to stop that nuisance?"

"Stop it! No! I can't stop it," she cried, with a little stamp of her foot. "It isn't only the cows. All kinds of animals come. Only this morning a mamma pig and a large family were found sleeping in one of the beds that they'd prepared by rooting up. The sentry on post number two drove them away, but the damage was done, then. I don't know what on earth to do about it."

"It's rather a problem," agreed Brinsley. "The sentries, of course, can't be going off post to chase those brutes into the pound. They'd be running all over the place. Down there in the native village there seems to be a certain number of people who take a delight in turning their animals into the plaza here just to annoy the Americans."

"I would very much like to discover the identity of those people," remarked Redfield, his gray mustache bristling.

"So would I," replied Brinsley. "I haven't been able to thus far, sir, though I tried hard enough before I was laid up."

Here Scott was heard to growl something. Though I did not catch the words, yet I knew what they were, in effect. He was maintaining that if we drove all the natives out and burned their houses, we would not only abate the nuisance under discussion, but at the same time achieve the disinfection of a region which sorely needed it. He had advocated this course many times before. Scott always was apt to be drastic in his methods.

"I was talking to Tommy about this affair. He says he'll stop it," said Philly bashfully, after a little. From lifelong experiences in army ways she knew perfectly well how our thoughts trended.

"Did Tommy say how he intended to go about it, my dear?" I asked, with affectionate sarcasm.

"No. He didn't say, but he'll do it somehow," returned Philly, with confidence.

"It's a big order, I fear, Philly," sighed Brinsley.

"All the same, he'll try if he starts out to. I know the lad," said Redfield positively. "It's a great pity that the orders about interfering with the persons of the natives are so much stricter than they were. I wish I knew how he intended to go about it," he added, a moment later.

"It's likely ye'll have the chance, gener'l, and right now, if I don't mistake myself," observed Father Terence. "He surely is up to somethin', judgin' from the crowd that's gathered."

We all looked. On the far side of the plaza a number of troopers were busy with buckets and extemporized brushes at the wall of the artillery stable, while behind them stood young Pendale, leaning on his sabre while he critically watched their work. Then some of the men fell back, revealing a poster of wrapping paper, with careful lettering so large that the field glasses we focused upon it scarcely were needed. And this is what we read:

PACABAT.

Buengat lan babuy, aso, dueg, caballo, vaca arum ni ran ayayep, ya anronog ira od jardin o plaza, paltoguen ira.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Redfield.

"Holy mother av Moses!" I heard Father Terence mutter to himself. "Has the lad gone daft?"

He had not gone daft however, as shortly appeared. Once more the men fell back, revealing another poster, quite as large as the first:

AVISO.

Cualquier puerco, perro, carabao, caballo, vacuno ó otro animal, que se hallare en el jardin ó plaza, sera fusilado.

Then, in order that no doubt might remain in the minds of any, a third laconic message was shown:

NOTICE.

Any pig, dog, carabao, horse, vacuno, or other animal found in the garden or plaza will be shot.

Redfield leaned back in his chair and chuckled. "Tom must have got that native schoolmaster to translate his order into the vernacular," he remarked.

"It'll do the worrk, I'm thinkin'," said Father Terence, with a grin. "An' the beautiful simplicity av it!"

"Has he any authority for posting notices like that?" I asked severely.

"None whatever," replied Redfield, chuckling again.

"It's a good scheme, though," said Brinsley decidedly. "It ought to have been thought of long ago."

I grunted and said nothing. For the moment my attitude was distinctly one of disapproval. It was not that I disliked young Pendale, for I did not; I liked him very much indeed. But I had reached the age when my old friends, one after another, were rapidly passing over the line. Redfield was the oldest and dearest of them all. Anything that looked at all like a sudden change in him brought at once to my mind a sickening fear that it might mean the beginning of the end—and formerly he had been noted as a stickler for the most minute points of discipline.

In this instance, however, a little reflection banished this fear. A glance at Redfield's strong, clean-cut face was enough to show that senility still was as far from him as it well could be. And there surely was reason in his fondness for this boy. Not only was Pendale to marry Philly, the dearest thing on earth to her grandfather, but also, as I knew, he constantly reminded Redfield of his only son, Philly's father, massacred by Indians in his first campaign. Furthermore, this resemblance was by no means imaginary on Redfield's part. Though more of mind and manner than physical, I had seen it myself before Redfield ever had mentioned that it also struck him. I could see it even now in the way that Pendale, his work finished, swaggered off to the guardhouse, where he belonged. And this act of his, in assuming the responsibility of those notices, was so characteristic of Jack Redfield that it seemed almost as though poor Jack had returned to earth in person.

"I wonder whom he'll get to do the shooting," I speculated. "I don't think he'll order the sentries to fire on any stray animal that may appear."

"As he isn't a blithering idiot, Drake,

it's safe to say he won't," snapped Redfield. "He'll do it himself, of course, from his own quarters. He's a dead shot, as you know, and the blank wall of the convent compound is right there opposite, to take any stray bullets."

"And so he'll probably not pot any blank thing he doesn't intend to except a stray native now and again," added Scott meditatively. "The plan seems a good one to me. But mine is better."

"But for the one fact that it would run us all up against a court-martial, I'm inclined to think you're right, Scott," I agreed. "Anyhow, I'd like to put that plan of yours in force so far as that beastly shack up there on the hill is concerned. We ought never to have allowed it built."

"I don't see how we could have helped it very well," said Redfield mildly. "It's beyond the post confines, you know, and we have no authority there. Is that the house you spoke of to me in making that complaint, Drake?"

"It is," I replied. "It's just been opened a little while ago, and I found it hard to get information enough to put salt on its tail, so to speak. But I think I've succeeded all right."

"It seems rather an addition to the landscape," remarked Helen critically, looking at the elaborate house of bamboo that stood on the hillside just back of Pendale's quarters. "What's wrong with it?"

"It's a condemned, double-dashed gin-mill," grunted Scott. "One of the kind that always springs up in the vicinity of a post, makes unnecessary work for my department, and lumps the triply-unblessed court-martial details. And there's more than that in this case," he went on. "We couldn't interfere with the liquor-selling; they're licensed for that. But there's gambling there as well."

Now, as a matter of fact, I also had known this, but had purposely refrained from making my complaint until Redfield was well enough to hear it. Colonel Swanson, the next in command, was such an extremely invertebrate sort of creature. It was not, however, the

sort of thing one cared to say aloud, even among these old friends.

"If you knew all along, it was your business to have made the complaint," I replied. "The gambling was really only a side issue with me; the men always will gamble one place or another. We can't stop it, so it doesn't much matter where they do it. But they have a store there as well, and that store, according to my information, is stocked largely with supplies stolen from the United States Army subsistence department. That's the real reason why I got after them."

"Oh, I say—you don't mean to tell me that the Devil Dodger is crooked, too, do you?" cried Brinsley, turning to me, his face full of apprehension.

"The what, sir?" demanded Redfield.

"He means Major MacNutt," I hastened to explain. "I don't think you've seen him yet, Redfield. He's our new commissary officer; a political appointment, but as straight as a line, if I mistake not."

Redfield heaved a sigh of relief. The former commissary officer, Hopkins, had been anything but straight. He had robbed the government systematically. This conduct of his, after gaining Brinsley both his wound and his sweetheart, had resulted in the suicide of Hopkins himself when discovered. But whether relieved or not to find that the new man was not the counterpart of the old one, Redfield was not to be diverted from his point.

"Then perhaps one of you will be good enough to inform me why that absurd name is applied to an officer of Major MacNutt's rank?" said he stiffly.

"There really isn't any harm intended, Redfield," I answered, seeing that no one else seemed inclined to take up the task of explanation. "It seems that MacNutt, in civil life, was a preacher, and got a degree of D.D. from some jerkwater college or other. The initials of that degree naturally suggested to some one the nickname to which you object; that's really all there is to it."

Hoping to avert the discussion of the Devil Dodger which almost inevi-

tably would occur in any case when Redfield once had started it, I brought the conversation back to the point where it had been when MacNutt's name had first been mentioned.

"I know the native who is supposed to be at the head of that house on the hill there," said I. "He was one who bought from Hopkins most of the goods that were stolen—the one, in fact, who first gave him the name of 'Hopkin, Sin Verguenza'—'Shameless Hopkins.' He must have accumulated an awful lot of commissary goods that he hasn't had a chance to sell. We never had proof against him that would hold in a court of law. Undoubtedly he'll keep all or nearly all of the stuff hidden in that new shack of his, so that he can get rid of it quietly, bit by bit, as opportunity offers. And I want to have him caught with the goods on, as I think he will in a very little while, if things go right. I only wish that we could have the same chance of nailing the white man who, I'm morally certain, is backing the enterprise, though his name doesn't appear."

"What is the name? Who is he?" asked Brinsley, but Redfield put the question aside with a wave of his hand, replacing it with another.

"What manner of man is this Major MacNutt?" he asked.

"Faith, you can see for yerself, gener'l, fer here he comes—an' poor Brinsley has lost his job," replied Father Terence, with another chuckle.

We all looked up and saw that MacNutt was coming along the path, with the widow of his predecessor clinging to his arm as tightly as though the planks upon which he walked had been covered with ice upon which she might slip if she let go for an instant. Though dressed in deepest mourning, her gray hair was as youthfully and untidily dressed as ever, and her faded face, which once had been pretty, was upturned to MacNutt's angular visage with as much coquetry as she had raised it to Brinsley's, many years before, when he was twenty and she twenty-four. Scott and I laughed and Brinsley smiled sheepishly at Father Ter-

ence's words, but Helen turned her face away. Philly dropped her eyes and Redfield gave vent to an exclamation of surprised disapproval. He doubtless had thought that the silly little woman, to whom he had taken what was for him an uncommon dislike, had gone with her daughter from the post long before.

"She stayed by request, Redfield," I said, in explanation. "The De—that is, Major MacNutt—wanted her to see if she couldn't help him in straightening out Hopkins' papers. They were rather tangled, it seems."

"I've no doubt but what they were," replied Redfield dryly. "I doubt, though, if she can be of much assistance in the— Good heavens!" he ended hastily, in obvious alarm. "Are they coming here?"

As he spoke, Mrs. Hopkins hesitated, the Devil Dodger cast her off as a steamer might cast off a tow, and bore down alone on our group.

"General," he said, as soon as he got close enough, in a voice that sounded as though it had been left unused until it had grown rusty, "did you see those placards over yonder?"

"I did," replied Redfield shortly.

He was a stickler for military etiquette, and this man had not even saluted, to say nothing of omitting to introduce himself, and besides, though he never would own to it, our commanding officer was most sensitive to personal comeliness in either man or woman. Personally, I rather liked the evident sincerity and singleness of purpose in the ugly, rawboned face that looked up at us. It was rather a stupid face, and one which indicated a narrow mind, but was a very honest one.

"Do you approve?" MacNutt went on, evincing, as he became more earnest, a slight Scotch accent. "D'y'e think it's right to shoot the animals that may come on yer bit flowers? I'm free to say," he added, with a certain reluctance, but as though in duty bound, and with a wave of his huge hand toward Mrs. Hopkins, "that had it not been for the finer perceptions of a woman, the injustice of this new rule might not have occurred to me. But these animals are

private property. D'y'e think it's right to destroy them?"

"I do," replied Redfield, even more stiffly than before. If anything could congeal the milk of human kindness that usually overflowed in my old friend, that allusion to Mrs. Hopkins was the very thing to do it.

"The natives'll no like it, I'm thinkin'," said MacNutt.

"It's not intended that they should," answered the commanding officer.

The Devil Dodger shook his head. "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword," quoted he, and turning away, rejoined Mrs. Hopkins, leaving Father Terence shaking with laughter.

"Faith, I wonder whether it's a pig or dog or carabao or wan av the other animals that 'taketh the sword,'" he chuckled. "They were the only wans under discussion, I think. But the man meant well, an' don't be too much offended at him, gener'l, darlin'. It's a case av spoons that he has on the widdy, if I don't mistake all the signs, an' sure that's punishment enough for anny man. But look, Drake! Isn't that the man that ye thought was backin' the joint up on the hill, there? The one with Lorilla Hopkins, I mean."

All five of us craned forward to get a better view of the couple spoken of. Father Terence was right; it was the man of whom I had spoken, and with him was Lorilla Hopkins, as she had been to my knowledge many times before. Her pretty, sullen face of late had hardened, grown coarser, and was more sullen than ever. Just then she seemed absorbed in conversation with her sleek, black-haired escort, but nevertheless she tossed her head with a scornful sniff as she passed us, and said something that made the man roll his beady, black eyes in our direction with a sneer under his carefully-tended, flowing mustache.

"Hang it, Drake, you must have seen that man before," said Brinsley to me in a low tone. "He used to deal faro in that Eureka joint in Frisco, and was caught using a trained box—don't you remember?"

"I don't," I replied. "I haven't the

honor of an entrée to the Eureka joint, nor an acquaintance with—what did you say his name was?"

"I didn't say," returned Brinsley. "But in San Francisco his name was Jack Hunt. Heaven alone knows what he calls himself here. He's about as perfect a specimen of the meander tin-horn type of gambler as I ever saw."

"I bow to your experience, Brinsley. But he looks the part, one must admit," I began, when Redfield, who, with rising hackles, had been listening to our conversation, broke in.

"Then it's an outrage—a disgrace to the post—to the army—that a young girl should be allowed to appear in the company of such a man!" he cried angrily. "Is there no woman—no man—here among us with enough rudimentary right feeling to warn the girl—to warn her mother, if necessary—of this peril?"

For a moment no one answered him. We all knew how hopeless it would be to make Redfield understand that we were absolutely powerless in the matter. It was Brinsley who threw himself into the breach.

"I'm afraid there isn't much use in anything we might try to do, general," said he. "In fact, I know there isn't. There's a reason why, but I can't say what it is—just now."

Redfield leaned back in his chair, and for the time he said no more. To him a young girl was simply a young girl; something to be protected, and revered for its inherent purity. He gauged them all by Philly.

An awkward silence followed, so that the chatter of those who strolled on the board walk once more rose distinctly to our ears; a silence so awkward that I was more than commonly thankful when a chance to end it presented itself.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said I, "if you will focus your glasses on the hill-side, just above the guardhouse, and look carefully, you may notice something that I have counted on to amuse you for a quarter hour or so. Also I may state that the results will be, I

hope, of a nature distinctly beneficial to the service."

Long before I had finished my little speech, all the glasses were leveled at the indicated point. There was little to be seen at first; only a long line of khaki-clad men filing cautiously along a path that wound through the woods of the hillside. But the direction in which these men were going told what their mission was; that path led nowhere except to the little clearing where stood the newly erected building. One could see the men only now and again, when an opening in the woods permitted. As the head of the column came to one of these openings, I heard Philly give a little gasp of surprise, and knew that she had recognized Pendale as the officer who led those men. Turning, I saw that her cheeks had paled, and that her hands, held one in the other were trembling.

"Why, Philly, my dear little girl!" I exclaimed, taking both her hands in one of mine. "Surely you're not frightened now. Pendale was sent on that little round-up because he happened to be on guard—not on account of its being in the nature of a forlorn hope, as you appear to think. When you really did see the boy in action, you were willing enough to have him go, and now that there's absolutely no danger, you're as scared as you can be, from the look of you."

"I know it's silly, Uncle Quent," she said, with a brave attempt at a smile. "But it was different then, somehow. He had to fight—you all did. But now it's nothing but a lot of commissaries that are concerned. What do I care for them? And if anything should happen—"

"If anything should happen to him, Philly, it would be in the line of duty," interrupted her grandfather, with something that almost approached severity. "How often must I tell you that one duty to which a man is ordered is as honorable as another? If Pendale should be killed now it would be a death quite as glorious as though he had fallen in battle, leading a charge."

"I don't care whether it would or

not!" she cried rebelliously. "But I do know that he belongs to me, and I don't want him hurt in that way, if he has to be hurt. And I do know that the government can better afford to lose a few groceries than I can to lose Tommy—and you can't make me think any differently, Dad's Dad, if you should talk forever. So there!"

Redfield turned slowly and looked at her. Catching sight of her pale face, all the severity left his own, leaving only anxiety in its place. "Why, Philly, girl, you're ill," he cried. "Scott, take—"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the person addressed, without even removing the glasses from his eyes. "Philly's all right—I've had my eye on her all along. She's a little overwrought, and the strain of your illness is telling on her. She needs to be let alone, that's all. Look up there at those men. They're getting ready now."

Upon reaching the edge of the clearing the party had halted in the scrub, where they could not be seen from the new building, which had shielded them almost entirely from our view as well. As Scott spoke, they darted from the shelter, and running hard, drew a line in front of the house. Other lines met them on each side, evidently from detachments previously sent out for that purpose, and the house was surrounded. Scott lowered his glasses in order to clap his hands, as though the men on the hillside could hear, and Redfield nodded approval.

As the lines were drawn Sanchez, the alleged proprietor, poked out a frightened face, withdrew it instantly, and slammed the door shut. Pendale stepped forward and knocked. Evidently there was no answer, for he knocked again, and we knew that he called as well. We could hear neither the knocking nor the voices of course, at that distance, but our powerful glasses brought the scene directly before our eyes—the silent motion of a moving picture show.

For a moment Pendale waited; then drew back, and taking a short run, threw himself against the door. It gave, but did not open. Again he drew back.

Then the door flew wide, and Sanchez darted out in a despairing dash for liberty. Tommy, crouching for his assault upon the door as though for a football rush, sprang forward, tackling the Filipino fairly around the waist and throwing him back against the building with such a shock that, though the wall saved him from falling, I could fairly see the breath leave his body. Nevertheless, there instantly was the glitter of steel as a knife rose and fell. Pendale staggered backward, clutching at his left arm just as the heel-plate of a sergeant's carbine stretched the native, sprawling and inert, prone upon the ground.

Redfield, whose language usually was as correct as language could be, cursed like a pirate. Philly sank to the ground in a shivering, sobbing little heap, there to be gathered into the sympathetic arms of Helen. Scott bounced from his chair like a rubber ball, but Philly pushed him away when he would have bent over her.

"Don't stop here—don't!" she begged. "Go to him. There's a horse. Go now! Hurry—*please* hurry!"

"There's no danger, Philly—keep your courage up!" shouted old Scott, as he bundled down the veranda steps. "I saw where the knife struck—it's not in a bad place."

A mounted orderly who was riding by threw himself from his horse at Redfield's lurid command as one might throw an old hat. In some occult manner Scott's globular body rose from the ground like a balloon, dropped into the saddle, and he was away as fast as the horse could run, drumming fiercely at its flanks with his spurless heels. We watched him grow small in the distance, and finally, stopping before the door of the raided building, roll out of the saddle and vanish within, where Pendale already had gone.

So interested had we been that it had not occurred to any of us that the promenading crowds below had seen nothing of all that had been going on. But until Scott's departure in so hurried and unaccustomed a manner, there had been nothing to draw their attention to

the hillside. But they stopped to look at him, and following him with their eyes, saw the cordon of men. Among them were Lorilla and her escort. The man took in everything at a glance, his face became livid with rage, and he began to curse.

Certainly there was nothing of the gambler's traditional impassiveness about the manner of this man. Rarely have I heard anything to equal his language—anything so far-reaching and comprehensive, though most of it was devoted to Sanchez, his antecedents, and probable future, but most of all his "carelessness." The people, even to Lorilla, drew away from him as he stood there, oblivious of them all. Redfield called sharply to the amazed and admiring orderly.

"Tell that man to leave the post at once. If he lingers, arrest and confine him," he snapped.

The man heard, and recalled to himself, he hurried away without waiting for the message to be delivered. The orderly, mounting the steps, saluted and handed Redfield a telegram, which he opened and read.

"The transport reports off Talpac," he said, tucking the envelope into his pocket. "She'll reach here by daybreak, and return at once to Manila. So we'll have that inspector with us to-morrow, it seems."

An hour before such news would have supplied the one topic of conversation, but now we did not mention it again. Instead we sat watching that building—especially Philly, whose great eyes were fixed unwinkingly upon the walls as though to penetrate them. In the next half hour we saw the wagon loaded with stolen commissaries, and when this was done saw, to our great relief, Pendale walk unassisted and climb to the seat of the wagon, and Scott take his place alongside. Then it started down the broad road that led into the post, and the men, guarding a couple of prisoners, followed it.

Philly must indeed have been overwrought. Never in her life had I known her to behave as she did then.

She always had been reserved with Pendale, almost to the point of coldness when in the presence of others. But now, when the wagon reached the convent and he got down to report, she threw herself into his arms and clung there, laughing and crying by turns, wholly indifferent, to all appearances, of the whole post—or the whole world, for that matter. She would not let him go, in spite of all he could say, until at last Scott took her away almost by force, sent Helen to put her to bed, and afterward went in himself and saw that she took some sedative or other that he had prescribed. Then he returned to Pendale, who still was blushing, and ordered him to his quarters to "keep pigs out of the plaza," he said. And as Redfield indorsed the order, Pendale, protesting that he was perfectly fit for duty, went.

The little dinner that I had planned for that evening was not as fully attended as it was to have been. Father Terence had been called away, Philly was asleep, and Helen would not leave her. So we four had it by ourselves, out there on the veranda where we had been sitting, lighted by the full moon which shone under the high *media aqua*, and gave light enough to read by, but did not attract the myriad winged things as candles would have done. It was not until dinner was over that the moon rose high enough to cast the roof shadow down upon us. Then we were left in darkness, while the rest of the world was flooded with a light that turned the foliage to greenish silver.

The events of the day and those which were likely to happen on the morrow had been discussed again and again, until they were worn out, and there ensued one of those sociable silences that are possible only among tried and congenial friends. In fact, I was dozing in my chair, I think, when a nudge from Brinsley roused me.

"Look!" he chuckled. "There's a pig coming into the plaza—three of 'em, by Jove! Now let's see what Tommy Pendale will do."

With breathless interest we watched those grunting, black shapes as they sol-

emlyn waddled in file from the direction of the native village toward the bounds of the plaza. Closer and closer they came; they almost had reached the boundary, and then, to our intense disgust, they passed behind a clump of shrubbery, which concealed them from our sight. It was the last we ever saw of them, so far as I know. A pig sometimes will carry away with him an unbelievable amount of lead about his person. It is difficult to describe the next few minutes.

A rifle shot cracked sharply from Pendale's quarters. Even at that moment I was astonished, sub-consciously, by the sharpness of the first echo that followed it, before the ones we were accustomed to hearing tossed the sound from hill to hill. If there was the squeal of a wounded pig, it was drowned in a scream—the shriek of a man in mortal agony. At the same time came a wild call for the guard, coupled with the word from the guardhouse that a prisoner had escaped. Then a confusion of shouts, running men, and dancing lanterns, paled by the moon.

Almost without volition I found myself hurrying along the wall of the convent compound, toward a spot in the shadow, where a crowd already had gathered. Scott was before me, elbowing his way through, and traveling in his wake, I found myself in a little open space, lantern-lighted, and surrounded by staring faces. Within this space stood Pendale, in his shirt-sleeves, carrying a carbine in his unbandaged arm, and also MacNutt, more gaunt and grim than ever. At their feet sprawled a body that looked with glazing eyes up into the night. From a ghastly wound in its side came a trickle that showed black on the green turf. It was Sanchez.

Scott bent over the body, glanced once, and straightened. "Death practically instantaneous," said he.

Then MacNutt's lank figure also straightened, and drew itself up to its full lean height. Slowly he extended his arm until a bony forefinger pointed directly at Pendale. At this moment, by some inspired gleam of intuition, I

surmised his object. Catching his arm, I pulled it violently back to his side.

"Stop, you fool!" I hissed in his ear—this was no time to choose words. "Do you want to make a scandal?"

Shaking me off without the slightest apparent effort, once more he extended his arm. "The scandal already is made," he thundered. "In the name of God, I accuse that man of murder. Murder for the sake of revenge, on account of an injury done. Lieutenant Pendale, you are under arrest."

Vainly I had tried to hush him, and now my patience was gone. "Hang it, man! Don't be an ass—you can't do this sort of thing. Of course you're his superior officer—but I'm yours, if it comes to that. Don't you know anything about army usage?"

"I care nothing about it," he replied in a tone that could be heard far and wide. "I tell you—"

"Oh, well, even if you don't care anything about it, it's possible that General Redfield may," interrupted Scott. "Come to him."

Now, Scott may or may not be a particularly powerful man; I don't know. I do know, however, that his weight is a thing to be respected. He leaned against MacNutt, and MacNutt started, and in the same manner was kept going. The ease with which this result was obtained would have charmed me. But now I was concerned only for poor Tommy. Ordering back the crowd, I slipped my arm through his, and spoke in a manner prohibited by the Army Regulations where a brother officer is the subject of the remarks.

"Come along, my boy," I said, with a certainty that I did not by any means feel. "No one in the world will believe you guilty, except that pin-headed old nincompoop. The general will arrange all this in no time."

He came with me obediently enough, but I doubt if he heard a word I said. He seemed dazed, and his movements were like those of an automaton.

Redfield, when we reached him, had heard in part what had occurred. The officer of the day had reported the es-

cape of Sanchez. The corporal had discovered it just as the rifle shot was fired. There was no mystery about the method employed. A drunken sentinel, an empty whisky bottle, and a hole in the bamboo wall told the whole story.

Redfield dismissed the men who had come with the officer, and turned to us. The first sight of his face informed me that he must have heard MacNutt's resounding bray. He looked three decades older than he had when I left the veranda. The skin of his face seemed like white parchment, stretched tightly over the bones, as he motioned that MacNutt should speak, and then listened to what he had to say. It amounted to a repetition of the accusation made before. It would need more proof than the accuser by any possibility could bring, I thought—but one never can be sure, no matter how innocent the accused may be, and even if acquitted such a thing is a terrible stain on a man's record unless definitely disproved. Then Tommy spoke for himself.

His tale was very simple. He had seen the pigs as we had, and waiting until one of them stepped over the boundary line of the plaza, he had fired and hit it, but as his sight had to be taken by moonlight, the animal was able to run away. As soon as he fired his shot, he heard another, coming from the hillside above him, apparently, and then he heard the scream and ran out to investigate. The rest we knew.

As Pendale finished, Redfield turned his impassive, official face once more to MacNutt. "Are you satisfied, major?" he asked. "You heard what this gentleman has said."

"Satisfied!" exclaimed MacNutt. "Can one be satisfied, in a case like this, with a simple denial? Who else but the man I have accused had the motive, as well as the opportunity, for killing this man. Answer me that."

"Who! Why, Jack Hunt had, of course—ten times as much motive and all the opportunity he wanted. Wasn't he in cahoots with this man Sanchez, who would undoubtedly split on an

American, as natives always do, and so get Hunt into the scrape?" cried Brinsley, unable to hold his peace any longer. "If you want a man with a motive, why don't you look for Hunt?"

"Of that I hear now for the first time," said MacNutt, his face setting itself into the expression of obstinacy which so often goes with natures like his. "My accusation is based on what I have seen, and on that I stand. My proofs—"

"You're not called upon to give your proofs here. That will come later," said Redfield sternly. "And very strong ones they must be to warrant such charges. But as you insist—" He turned to Penfield and his tone changed. "I'm sorrier than I can say, my boy—if you were my own son I could scarcely be more so. Doubtless all this will come right. But in the meantime, I have no choice, I fear."

There was no need to tell the young fellow in specific words that he was under arrest, charged with deliberate murder; he understood all that, and now that the blow had fallen, he tried to meet it like a man, as he was.

"I know it, sir," he said, pulling himself together with a visible effort. "Thank God, Philly doesn't—yet," he added in a lower tone, and evidently to himself. Yet the tone was not so low but what I heard it, and some one else did, as well.

For at that moment Philly herself stepped from the door, with Helen fluttering anxiously at her heels. Philly was dressed in some sort of a long crimson garment—I don't know the technical name for it—her hair, braided in a thick tail, hung to her knees. Her eyes were very bright, and though her face still was pale her step was firm enough as passing us by without a glance, she went straight to Pendale. She rested both hands on his unhurt shoulder, and looked into his face, her own full of a trust and infinite love such as I never before had seen in the eyes of any woman. Somehow it seemed a coarse intrusion even to look at a thing so sacred, but I couldn't turn my eyes away, and Philly prob-

ably did not even realize that we were there.

"Philly does know, Tommy," said she. "Philly has heard some, and the rest she can guess; so she knows all about it, dear, and she doesn't care a bit—not a little, little bit. So you mustn't, either." Then, ever so gently, she clasped her hands back of his neck, and pulling his lips down to hers, she kissed him.

In spite of the philosophy upon which I rather pride myself, and which generally guides me through life without undue emotion, I was moved far more than I would have thought possible—so much, in fact, that I was very much disgusted with myself. And being disgusted, I found, didn't help in the least. But I was not the only guilty party. The Devil Dodger was standing close by me, and he turned his head away.

"Poor lassie!" I heard him murmur. "Poor bit girl!"

With his lips close to her ear, Pendale whispered something, and though I could not hear the words, I know he begged her to leave him, for she smiled and shook her head. Then he tried to speak, but no words came. He swayed where he stood, and had the Devil Dodger not caught him and eased him to the ground, he would have fallen. He had lost more blood that day than we knew; that and the mental strain had been too much for him, and so, for the first time in his life, Tommy Pendale had fainted dead away.

Redfield, unmindful of his half-mended leg, all but sprang from his chair. "Scott!" he barked. "Scott, I say! Where in blazes is Scott? Fetch him, somebody. That man never is on hand when he's wanted!"

But in spite of Redfield's eminently unjust remarks, no Scott appeared, and it was the Devil Dodger who bent over the unconscious form of Tommy Pendale.

"It's a swoon, nothing more," said he. "But the lad's weak; he's best in bed. If the young leddy—"

"Philly, go back to your room and go to bed," snapped Redfield, glad of a chance to give an order as a vent to

his feelings. Philly looked up in his face and smiled, but shook her head.

"I never shall leave him again, Dad's Dad," she said very quietly. "Have some one bring some water, please. Look—he's coming to."

The water already was there; Helen had brought it and a pillow, which she slipped deftly under Pendale's head, while Philly bathed his face. In a little while he opened his eyes just as Scott, with Father Terence, came puffing up the steps. There were ugly stains on the surgeon's white uniform, but neither he nor any one else minded that. He had something to say, and he intended to say it. Catching up the carbine that Tommy had carried, he snapped open the breech, throwing out an exploded shell, which he picked up. Then laying down the weapon, he handed something to Brinsley.

"Look at that," he commanded. "Tell us what it is." Brinsley examined the object for a moment and then looked up.

"It's a soft-nosed sporting bullet," he said. "A three hundred and one Savage."

"It couldn't be fired out of a Kräg, could it?"

"Of course not. The bottling is entirely different. You know that."

"You're an expert, aren't you? And you're *sure* of what you say?"

"I'm ranked as an expert in these things. But it doesn't need an expert to tell what I just did. Of course I'm sure."

"Then, gentlemen," said Scott impressively, holding up the battered bit of lead, which he had taken from Brinsley's hands, so that all could see by the light which came from the window, "I wish to call your attention to the fact that I just took this bullet from the body of that native. I thought that something of this sort must be the case. A hard-nosed bullet would have driven right through and gone on."

"Thank God!" came a faint voice from the floor.

Scott started. In his eagerness he had noticed nothing until the business in hand was finished.

"Good Heavens!" he scolded. "Don't you people know any better than to go on like this with a wounded man? He's a lot weaker than he has any right to be, and there'll be fever before long. Drake, hand me that whisky. Redfield, send somebody for a stretcher and a couple of men. I'll take him to the hospital for to-night. To-morrow he gets sick leave, arrest or no arrest, and he goes on that transport for a change of air. Philly, go to bed."

All Scott's orders, save one, were obeyed as promptly as his orders generally were. But Philly, though she laid Pendale's head, which she had taken into her arms, carefully back on the pillow, did not go to bed. Instead, she went to her grandfather, and putting her arms around his neck, whispered something to him. Something that made him start, blow his nose violently, and explode more violently still:

"Good God, child! Are you crazy? Certainly not!"

But Philly, clinging to him, buried her face on his shoulder, so that all we could see was the tip of one ear that was far more pink than was its wont.

"But think, Dad's Dad," she pleaded. "I've got to go with Tommy. You heard me say I wouldn't leave him again. And then you know it would have to come anyway, and it's like a tooth. It's never so bad to have one wrench and then over with as it is to wait for the dentist. If we do it now I can take care of Tommy, and we'll be in Manila when the regiment is ordered away. And Father Terence is here—and we're neither of us Catholics, and so he could——"

She stopped, and it took a second or two for her meaning to filter through our brains. It was Father Terence who first comprehended.

"Is it marry you, do ye mane?" he almost shouted, his brogue stronger than ever in his excitement. "I can that. Ye're both heretics, as yez say. But I'll do it annyhow, in spite av the

bishop or the divyle himself—an' God forgive me fer sayin' that same!" he ended contritely, suddenly recalled to himself.

Scott set down the glass which he had been holding to Tommy's lips. "Married? Now? A blazing good notion!" said he, so crossly that I was sure that he must be really moved. "Ship 'em both off to Manila together. One without the other would mope like a sick cat. Have 'em both on my hands then. Best notion I've heard, that of getting 'em both off at once."

There was more talk, but from that time on it was a foregone conclusion that things would go as Philly wanted them to. Things nearly always did. And so Pendale's back was braced by more pillows, and with Philly kneeling by his side, Father Terence began the ceremony. Few stranger weddings were ever seen, I fancy. I don't know; I didn't see it. Never have I been able to understand why women always cry at a wedding. I don't understand any more now, but I haven't the amused contempt for this habit of theirs that I once had.

When it was over, Scott blew his nose as though he were sounding a bugle call.

"Now pack him off to bed," he ordered. "Don't let him walk—carry him. Then I'll dope him so that it'll last until the ambulance takes him to the steamer."

Before any one else made a move, the Devil Dodger stooped.

"I'm sorry, lad," said he. "I thought I was right, at the time, but I see differently now. Ye'll understand that?"

Pendale reached up a feeble hand, which MacNutt gingerly took, and Philly laid hers over them both as she smiled up at him. Then, with an ease that astounded us all, the Devil Dodger picked up Tommy in his arms and carried him into my bedroom—Philly told him where to go—and laying his burden down there, left them.

THE WOMAN FEARER

BY
Steel Williams



In every mining camp of the northern Rockies, "Whalebone" Thorp was believed to be a "woman hater." But this opinion did him great injustice, as fear rather than dislike was his real reason for habitually avoiding all contact with the gentler sex. His childish experience with women had been particularly unfortunate. His mother, a heavy-handed, undemonstrative woman, had died about the time she had driven the boy well into the mysteries of the "rule of three." In departing she committed young Thorp to the keeping of her sister, a vinegar-visaged, sharp-tongued virago, whose chief joy in life thereafter seemed to be found in exercising her Amazonian arm on the little fellow's quivering body.

Then, one night, while bitterly nursing some especially tender blue marks, he brought all the powers of his small, thirteen-year-old brain to bear upon the question of existence as he found it and, after as calm reflection as his aching bones would permit, he concluded that life with woman was not worth living. And, shaking the Indiana dust from his bare, brown feet, he took Horace Greeley's advice and started West to grow up with the country.

After limping along the trail for two days he was overtaken by a "prairie schooner" bearing the motto "Califor-

nia or Bust," and presently found himself seated beside a sharp-faced woman, whose cracked, high-pitched voice struck terror into his shivering little soul as, gripping his thin arm, she threatened to "skin him alive" if he didn't tell her the truth in answer to her every question. Then she had pushed him into the wagon box, where her husband lay stretched on the blankets, saying:

"I 'low the little devil can be made to earn his keep," and, turning her carrot head, cracked the whip over the four big black mules which her claw hands guided. But the boy had no fear of man. And, placing his trembling lips to the dust-laden ear of his unshaven companion, he pointed his slim fingers at the gaunt figure on the seat in front of them, and whispered softly:

"Say, mister, is women all like that?" And the man solemnly assured him that there were no other kind to be found on earth. And, libel that it was, Whalebone believed him, and then and there the fear of woman ripened in his heart. That night he ran away again and tramped the road till just at daybreak he found himself near a dozen or more covered wagons strung along a little stream where their owners were camped. Crawling into one of the wagons, he hid himself in some hay and went to sleep. When he woke he was moving along the trail. Cautiously raising his black head, he saw

that he was with a "train," and with a sigh of relief he noted that a man held the reins of his conveyance. He was ravenously hungry, but he would have starved rather than face the thing he feared. Crawling cautiously over the hay the thing that terrorized him was made clear as he breathed into the driver's dozing ear:

"Say, mister, be there any women with this outfit?"

"I'm powerful sorry to say there ain't, sonny," came the laughing answer as his surprised brown eyes glanced quizzically over the barefoot mite of humanity, who at once showed his trust in his own sex by promptly squirming to the seat. And, confidences having been exchanged, he gravely informed his amused companion that he, too, intended to become a miner. That night the two-score men, who were bound for the gold fields of Colorado, decided that the boy's desire to become a miner should be gratified. Willing, active, and tough, he was dubbed Whalebone, and he soon hobnobbed with his elders as if he now felt himself to be a man among men. But in one particular he differed radically from his fellows, for whenever it so happened that a woman, either young or old, appeared upon the scene it was a signal for Whalebone's immediate disappearance. Nor could he be cajoled or frightened into showing himself until the wearer of skirts was out of sight. Neither was any one able to get him to give any reason for his conduct, which was finally set down to boyish diffidence.

"That'll pass away, all right, though, when his whiskers begin to grow," laughed one of the men the day the point was settled as to the reason for the boy's peculiar action.

But in this he was mistaken, for Whalebone's fear of womankind became stronger as time went on. And as a "woman hater" he had drifted from mining camp to mining camp until at last he had staked out the Sure Thing gold claim, high up on the bleak, quartz-seamed side of Owyhee Moun-

tain, Idaho. For two months he tunneled along the vein, alone.

Then, one day, feeling the need of rubbing elbows with his fellow man he took his way to the little mining camp, which nestled its few rough frame buildings among the boulders on Owyhee's giant foot. Such society as was to be found in Silver was always first looked for in a saloon and gambling house which bore the facetious title of "Sorrier's Antidote." But when Whalebone entered, except for the "barkeep," the place was deserted. For a few moments he endeavored to engage the drowsy "whisky slinger" in conversation, but his efforts proved a failure.

It was at this psychological moment that young Clay Delano, who had arrived in camp but an hour before, happened in.

"Have somethin'?" eagerly asked the obsessed miner the instant his blue eyes caught sight of the tall dark-haired stranger.

"Don't care if I do," smiled the new arrival.

That night Clay moved his belongings to the Sure Thing, in which he was now, by deed of gift, an owner of an undivided one-half interest. The young man had tried to make Thorp accept a substantial sum for his deed, but Whalebone had merely laughed.

"I'll take a one-case note to make the deal bindin' legal, but not another cent, for I positive regards you same as my own son, and I ain't the kind of a man to rob his own child."

And from that day the men had been not only partners, but fast friends as well. For the next few weeks Thorp was as happy as it is possible for an unmarried man to be. Then the Widow Brown and her daughter Molly located a claim half a mile north of the Sure Thing and Whalebone's peace of mind was ended. Not that the ladies in any way thrust themselves upon him, personally, for he had never so much as seen either of them, but he knew that Clay spent most of his spare time with the widow's blonde-haired daughter, and he feared the worst.

But now all thought of women and their wiles was temporarily driven from Thorp's mind. For days the showing on their claim had been improving and at last a final blast carried them into what the senior partner called the "mother lode." And the half-crazed Whalebone knew that the yellow fortune, of which he had dreamed from the day he had been voted a miner by the men of the "wagon train" on the Iowa prairie, was now an actual, visible reality.

Almost day and night the two men worked along the vein, which grew richer and richer as they drifted. And now the camp conceded unanimously that the Sure Thing was even a greater "find" than the Gold Dollar, which required eight figures to express its rating. Then, one day, as the partners were fingering the rotten quartz, which carried the yellow specks, the thing that Thorp had greatly feared came upon him.

"What good is all this gold going to do us, anyway, Whalebone?" asked Clay, tossing aside the sample he had been examining, and knitting his dark brows despondently.

Thorp's lean fingers tugged thoughtfully at his square-cut white mustache as his blue eyes closely scanned the flushing cheeks of his young partner. Then he answered in an uneasy, anxious tone:

"What's the use of askin' such a fool question? You know as well as I do that this yellow stuff is the 'quivilant for everything that's to be had on earth, so don't get blue, sonny, for soon as we get the stamps to runnin' you can go to spendin' it just as fast as you want to."

"I understand that, all right, but that method of getting rid of my coin ain't by no means satisfying, for what I want"—a deeper color racing to his smooth tan—"is some one to help me scatter my money who takes an interest in—me, for myself, instead of what may be got away from me."

"There ain't no such a one to be found this side of the grave, Clay," laughed the older man cynically.

"Yes, there is," answered Delano, in a confident tone, "for I feel certain that, if it wasn't for her ma, I could get some one to take the kind of interest in me that I really need to enjoy my money."

Whalebone's eyes dimmed as if he was about to give way to his feelings in a most unmanly manner, but recovering his self-control he brushed away the threatening moisture and asked in a rather hurt tone:

"Why ain't you never heretofore let me know the state of your feelin's toward this girl, who you appears to regard as the one thing that'll make your money worth while?"

Clay hesitated as if at a loss to find words to justify his failure to confide in the man through whom his fortune had come. But before he could find his tongue Thorp laid his hand affectionately on the young giant's shoulder and said whimsically:

"I guess I know why you been so close-mouthed, but while personal I'm as 'fraid of women as the devil is of holy water I stands ready to back you to the limit in gettin' this girl, who I fervent hopes is all you think she is. So"—Thorp's high-pitched voice softened persuasively—"tell me all about it and maybe I can do somethin' to help you get her."

"Molly's willing enough, but she's true blue to her ma, who says she can't bear to think of living alone," answered Clay, in a disconsolate tone, "and as the widow refuses pointblank to let me give her a home with Molly it looks as though we can't get married till she crosses the divide, which won't be for twenty or thirty years yet, for she's only forty herself."

"I may be wrong, son, as to my general idee of women," grinned Whalebone, in a facetiously threatening tone, "but when it comes to a man's offerin' to live with the mother for the sake of getting her girl it's a absolute proof of idiocy, and I warns you that if you ever suggests such a thing again I'll have you committed to the asylum for the feeble-minded."

"You wouldn't say that, Whalebone,"

laughed Clay good-humoredly at his partner's ancient, slanderous joke, "if you'd ever seen the widow, who is mighty near as young looking and handsome as Molly, herself. Black hair, just frosting a little," continued Delano, enthusiastically cataloguing the widow's charms, "big dark eyes, pink cheeks, and a strawberry mouth, which if it wasn't for Molly's rosebud would make mine water. And such a figure, too. Why, she don't look over thirty, and if I was senior partner in the Sure Thing I'd try to persuade her to join me in spending my money and give her girl a chance to make a similar arrangement with my junior."

For a moment Whalebone's blue eyes held a startled, frightened light, then his face broke into a smile.

"I'd do most anything on earth for you, son," he chuckled softly, "but constitutional I'd rather commit suicide than be tied to any woman on top of sod, though"—his grin broadened—"I admits that the way you schedules her points makes her some interestin', though she's probable got such a bad temper as to more'n offset the attractions you enumerates."

"She's the best-natured woman I ever saw, bar Molly," came the laughing answer. "And if you ever get acquainted with the widow," bantered Clay, "I'll bet you a thousand even it won't be a week before you're as crazy to get her as I am the daughter."

And a few moments later, from the cabin window where he stood resting his sharp chin in his cupped hands, Whalebone saw his partner swinging down the path which wound its way along the side of the mountain to a point two hundred feet distant from the widow's three-room log house, then crooked down to the camp, a full half mile below. His first thought was that Clay was on his way to Molly, but as he saw him pass the turn Thorp exclaimed petulantly:

"Lord, what a awful lot of trouble women causes!" Then an anxious frown wrinkled his forehead as he muttered reminiscently: "I've knowed two or three fellers that's gone to the

devil over females. And," with an apprehensive shiver, "if Clay should take to drinkin' over this thing, he's so awful high strung that it's more'n likely he'll some day get mixed up in a shootin' scrape, and if he does, seein' he ain't extra handy with his gun, I probable has to plant him, which'd sure be the death of me, too."

And at thought of such a dire possibility he exclaimed in angry tones:

"I see what you're up to all right, my lady. You're a tryin' to work things so Clay'll ultimate offer you a big stake to let him have the girl. But, by the Lord," grinding his words through set teeth, "you ain't a-goin' to work that game on him if I can help it, which, my purty, schemin' widow, I think I can."

And his fear of woman being, for the moment, obliterated by the foolish passion into which he had worked himself, a minute later, in his soiled miner's clothes, he was hurrying on his way to interview the lady, herself. But soon his steps slackened and by the time he reached the turn in the path leading to the widow's home his knees were trembling. He stopped. Then his courage oozed away completely, and, limp as a rag, he squatted behind a protecting fir to "think her over." Presently he peeked up at the cabin, but the next instant his white head flew back, for the widow dressed in a fresh pink print was moving down the path. But discovering a crack in the bark of the tree behind which he was hiding he was able, without fear of immediate detection, to watch her as she picked her way from rock to rock.

"I s'posed Clay was a stretchin' it some," he breathed, his soft whisper vibrant with admiration, "but she is a good-looker—sure. He's right, there ain't only a touch of frost in that ink hair of hers, and"—his sigh was as gentle as the faint breeze which just stirred the green above him—"I actual believe if a feller unwound it he'd find it reached clear to her heels." Then his hand rubbed hastily over his rough chin as he frowned. "There's a full week's stubble on my face, which makes

me look more like a ape than usual, and while of course I personal don't care nothin' about what she'd think if she'd get a sight of me, I ain't a-goin' to disgrace Clay by lettin' this widder think the boy has got a monkey for a partner."

And, sinking quietly to the foot of the protecting fir, he cautiously wormed himself around it as the trim-built Mrs. Brown tripped by him. When her receding footsteps told him he was safe he gave a long sigh of relief as he mopped the moisture from his wet brow, then chuckled jocosely:

"It's plain to me that my first idee of how to open up play agin' this lady is all wrong, so I think I'll hustle for shelter and figure out another system."

The carrying out of his new scheme of attack which he had, perhaps, even then formulated, involved a complete change in his attire. And when, at last, he stood smooth-shaved before the small wall mirror an odd little smile flickered about his thin lips as he carefully knotted the flowing tie which partially hid the white cord lacing of his darker blue flannel shirt.

"I ain't so darned old or actual bad lookin'," he commented, with pardonable vanity. "Won't be fifty for six months yet and I ain't got no wrinkles at all, 'ceptin' these fine things," drawing his finger along the lines under his bright clear eyes, "which anybody can see comes from bein' out in the sun and wind. And if it wasn't for my bein' so premature gray I'd pass for forty—easy, and—" But at that instant Whalebone happened to glance through the open window and he saw the widow toiling slowly up the mountain on her homeward way.

Then, as if struck by a sudden and irresistible impulse, he snatched his new black Stetson from its peg and hurried down the path as though urgent business were calling him to camp. Now, while Thorp knew that he was having some new and peculiar sensations, he had not the faintest suspicion that, at first sight, he had fallen desperately in love with the handsome widow. And he actually believed that he was about

to offer himself as a sacrifice so that Clay might obtain Molly. And it is with this theory of the case in mind that we must judge him as he carefully timed his steps to meet the lady at the foot of the tree around which he had successfully "Injunied it" a short two hours before.

The widow knew Whalebone well by sight, for she had often seen him pass to and fro along the path. She knew, too, from rumor that he was said to be a woman hater, and, being thoroughly feminine, it is idle to say that she had long wished to meet him and see what she could do to cure him of his strange disease.

With both beauty and charm, Mrs. Brown felt reasonably well equipped for her meeting with Whalebone, which she now saw was but a matter of seconds. The stolen glance which she cast at him from under her dark lashes as he neared her, was one of distinct approval. Her close-at-hand inspection but confirmed the opinion that she had once expressed to Molly that: "Mr. Thorp is a very distinguished-looking man."

Now, as every one knows, when a widow of forty speaks of an eligible gentleman in such terms it is certain that she will not feel deeply offended if he asks her to lay aside her weeds for his sake. But no woman of pride could be expected to return a favorable answer to a proposal for her hand if the "distinguished-looking" one were so lacking in delicacy and tact as to inform her, almost the instant that he had clasped her small fingers for the first time, that "he'd face hell fire itself for the sake of his partner."

And this was what the excited, blundering Whalebone did. Then at once he asked her to marry him, not for his own sake, but Clay's. So that it is no wonder that his offer was curtly rejected by the indignant little woman, who hurried away from him as fast as her small feet would carry her.

"Fool! Ijit! Ass!" he muttered savagely, as he took his crestfallen way to the camp below. "She'll never speak to me ag'in in the world."

He groaned dejectedly as he entered the saloon for an antidote to the sorrow which now nearly overwhelmed him. For now he realized what we have known for some time, that he was head over heels in love with the woman, who he felt would never forgive him for referring to the fires of hell when proposing for her hand.

"Thought probable I'd find Clay here?" he remarked inquiringly, as he filled his glass.

"He's gone down the trail to look at a claim," answered the barkeep. "Only stopped in here for a minute or two 'long about noon. Looks like we're goin' to get a blizzard?" he concluded questioningly.

"Ain't noticed the weather, but guess if it's goin' to storm I better be makin' tracks," and with a nodded "so-long," Thorp left the saloon.

"Well, anyway it's evident the boy ain't took to drink," he said in a relieved tone. And, glancing upward, he gave a whistle of surprise, then walked rapidly for the path which led to the Sure Thing mine. As he turned into the faint trail his heart jumped to his mouth at sight of the widow, who stood on a bare table rock five hundred feet above him anxiously scanning the heavy mist which hung about the top of the snow-capped mountain.

She knew that in late October snow was to be expected any time, and she was evidently debating whether to keep on toward camp, for which she had started, or return home. A moment longer she watched the gathering cloud, now thickening into a mass of whirling sleet and snow, then lowering her black eyes she caught sight of Whalebone, and her irresolution ended. Turning, she bent her head to meet the icy blast which at that instant came sweeping down upon her.

Whalebone yelled himself hoarse in a vain attempt to warn her of what he knew to be her great danger. Already the trail was blotted out. And to lose the path meant death for the woman, whom Thorp was now straining every muscle of his seasoned, whipcord body to overtake. But five hundred feet up

steep rocks in the face of a hurricane of snow is a matter of many minutes, even for a tough old-timer, and as he toiled slowly up the steep he shivered.

"I'm chilled to the marrow, myself, and with nothin' but that pink dress to protect her she'll freeze to death even if she holds the trail, which it's a thousand sand to one she won't."

And redoubling his efforts he presently reached the wind-swept rock where he had first caught sight of the woman he was now venturing his own life to save. And this he nearly lost, for with a loud snap a great fir's roots were torn from the rocky seams which had held it in place for two centuries, then reeling in the howling gale it crashed down upon him. He felt it coming, for he could not see, and dropped flat into the path whose slight depression put the few inches between his body and the tree-trunk necessary to prevent his being crushed.

"Good Lord save her from bein' buried under one of them things!" he groaned in as fervent and heart-felt a prayer as ever passed mortal lips; then he was on his feet again.

For the next thousand feet his progress was more rapid, as the trail was nearly level. But now it was getting colder, and he knew that if the widow was still alive it was only a question of minutes until she would sink down exhausted, and if she should fall asleep the end would soon come. Then as he neared the next sharp rise there came a momentary lull, and through the whirling flakes he could dimly discern the figure of the woman he was pursuing as she staggered up the steep incline. She was off the trail and working to the right, though not a hundred feet away. The next instant a fresh blast blotted her out of Whalebone's sight as if the earth had swallowed her.

Nine men out of ten, probably, would have left the path and attempted to reach her in the shortest possible distance. And, too, the nine would likewise have split their lungs trying to attract her attention. But Thorp understood the game too well to risk

wasting precious breath against the tempest which would have almost drowned the roar of Niagara, itself. And to try to find her, even if but twenty feet away, unless he had something to guide him, he knew was about the same thing as looking for a needle in a haystack. And nearly double, Thorp bent his white head close to the path for some seconds, then slowly followed it along.

In a blizzard footprints are practically formless the instant the foot leaves the snow, but there are certain faint marks by which they can be traced by the trained eye when freshly made. And it was these little spots which now guided Whalebone to the point where the widow had wandered from the trail. Here he stopped as if unable to further trace her. But at last his sharp blue eyes sighted a small lump which he examined closely for a moment, then moved on again.

If he made a mistake now he knew that the woman he loved must pay the forfeit with her life; and without once raising his head he worked his way along until finally the marks became so distinct that he felt certain the one he sought could not be a dozen feet away. Cautiously he raised his heavy frost-matted brows, and almost within his grasp he caught sight of her. She had fallen to her knees, but as he sprang toward her, she reeled to her feet and staggered blindly on. But she was not to face death alone any longer, for on the instant Thorp's arm was around her waist.

Benumbed and half frozen as she was, Mrs. Brown seemed wholly unable to realize what had happened. Then, uttering a startled cry of joy, she dropped her head to her captor's shoulder, and clung to him as if he was the dearest object of her affections on earth.

But such exhibition of feminine gratitude, or whatever other name you choose to call it, was much too brief to suit Whalebone, from whose willing arms she slipped the next second despite his protests that he could carry her—easy.

"I can get along with just a little help, I know," she asserted positively.

And as he was forced to yield to her wishes in the matter, he stopped talking and acted, so that presently she was snugly wrapped in his heavy black coat, regardless of her strenuous objections that he would freeze to death without it.

"I've been nearly roastin' ever since I started to chasin' you," he laughed while helping her into it, "and honest Injun I'd have throwed it away 'fore I'd gone ten rods, 'ceptin' I knew you'd need it if I caught you." Which statement the widow knew to be a facetious fiction, but it made her heart beat more warmly for the man, who had proved himself a gentleman in heart, even if he had but recently shown himself to be a most ungallant suitor for her hand.

But they were "not yet out of the woods," as was proved by the howl of the wind among the scattered firs which were wildly tossing their giant green arms about their swaying trunks as though seeking to protect their creaking bodies from the fierce assault of the unusual tempest which still thundered the notes of its wild music like cannon shot along the mountain's rocky side.

Then Whalebone slipped his arm about the slim waist again, although Mrs. Brown, now that she had some fitting protection against the cold, really hardly needed such thoughtful assistance, but for some reason best known to herself she made no objection to it. And apparently quite satisfied that he was not giving offense, Thorp tightened his protecting arm as he slowly but surely retraced his steps to the path. But now, as frequently happens in such sudden storms, the wind became less violent, and from there on the couple walked more rapidly. When they reached the tree which marked the spot where he had made his proposal but a few hours before, Whalebone was seized by sudden panic as he recalled the scene, and the fear of woman was again upon him. His encircling arm fell to his side as he stammered:

"It's ca'med down so that I guess you can get up to your place all right alone, so I'll just hump along for home for fear it may get to blowin' hard again."

The widow's face wore a perplexed frown as she half stared at the man, who had unhesitatingly risked his life for her. Why did he want to get away from her—now? Then the truth dawned on her, and laying a detaining hand on his shivering arm, she said gayly:

"You're not going to leave me till you've had something hot to eat, for you're nearly froze to death now; and without your coat, which I can't spare till I get inside"—she laughed humorously—"you know you'd die before you got halfway to your cabin."

And linking her arm in his she led him unresisting toward her house. Thorp's fright seemed to vanish almost as quickly as it came, for hardly had they taken a dozen steps until he once more gallantly placed his arm around her, presumably the better to assist her up the steep grade. But this time, Mary demurred at the delicate attention.

"You mustn't do that—now," she said warningly, "for Molly might see you from the window."

And Whalebone, who in a short six hours had become metamorphosed from a woman fearer into a widow worshiper, sighed regretfully as his arm tightened meaningly for a second before he complied with what, under the circumstances, seemed a most reasonable request. It is not certain as to this, but the widow apparently gave his arm an answering little squeeze then just as they were entering her cabin.

A cheerful wood fire was blazing in the large open hearth of what was called the "settin' room"; and through an open door could be seen the warm glow from the kitchen stove, to which the surprised Molly was devoting her attention as Whalebone and her mother came in. And while Thorp and the

widow were thawing out in front of the spluttering fir logs, the brown-eyed, blonde daughter busied herself about the kitchen.

And presently the savory smell of frying eggs, sizzling bacon, and boiling coffee was wafted to Whalebone's frozen nose, which at the moment was being skillfully treated for frostbite by Mrs. Brown, who now held a ball of snow against its frosted tip. No one but Molly knows how it happened that the kitchen door was closed at just that second; but closed it was, and the now fearless Thorp improved the opportunity by deliberately leaning over and loudly smacking the blushing Mary's ripe lips.

"Don't! Don't!" she whispered. "Molly'll hear you!"

But the shameless Whalebone did it again, though more softly; and before he released the widow he had evidently satisfactorily explained his blundering allusion to hell fire. But a sharp knock interrupted their exchange of confidences and, hastily smoothing her dark locks, Mrs. Brown opened the door, and Clay, whose black eyes almost popped from his head with surprise at sight of his partner, stepped inside.

But explanations were not yet in order, for Molly opportunely appeared and the young man's questioning gaze changed to a look of admiration as his eyes shifted from Thorp's puckered face to the pretty blonde. Then a curious smile flashed to Whalebone's blue eyes as he sprang to his feet and brazenly threw his arms around the struggling widow, chuckling loudly:

"If you've got the spunk of a jack rabbit, Clay, you'll kiss your future mate like I'm goin' to—mine."

And though Delano showed his astonishment in the exclamation which escaped him, this did not prevent him from doing his best to follow the example of his shameless partner by chasing after Molly, who ran shrieking into the kitchen.

IN MUSICLAND

By William F. Armstrong



HERE stays Elektra?"
"Surely it is her hour, the hour in which she howls for her father until all the walls resound."

These are the buoyant words with which Richard Strauss' opera of "Elektra" opens, and they constitute the text, of which all that follows is but an elaboration.

The music might have been written with a bayonet, or, to avoid anachronism, an axe, for that is the instrument which, for one hour and a half, *Elektra* clamors to wield; the remaining fifteen minutes of uninterrupted thirst-violence which the work betrays witness the realization of her gentle scheme.

The sum and substance of it all are hate and vengeance; these are the emotions that the greatest of modern German composers has set out to realistically intensify in music, to show the very lengths which an elemental humanity, consumed and burning with its lust, is able to encompass. Of action there is but little. The ancient Sophoclean plan of talk, talk, talk, which inspired the first "Elektra," has been fully transmitted to this latest variation.

Whistler, as will be recalled, when one of his "symphonies in gray" was criticised as not by any means holding

to his proclaimed color scheme, wrote: "Fools! Does a symphony in F repeat the one note interminably?" Perhaps even he, after once hearing "Elektra," would have conceded that the feat of such set scheme could be accomplished.

Very briefly does Strauss deviate from his main purpose; from the first single sharp, startling chord that sounds out from the orchestra into the darkened house as the curtain rises, until that curtain falls on well-earned stillness, hate, hate, hate beats on convulsively in the music.

For fifty-five minutes women's voices, strained to raucousness above the orchestral stress and clamor, are heard without relief; the music is mainly fortissimo with short concessions to piano thrown in, apparently, not as contrast, but that the clang and whirl may gather fresh volume to proceed with.

From the outset it is evident that the composer is ardently in sympathy with his tremendous monotony. Principal motives there are, some forty-five, rarely more than two bars in length, exclamatory, in part, for their very brevity, sometimes finely apt in their portrayal of the character mood, but often hysterical, dry, and unpromising, as the themes of Strauss so often are. At points these motives fail of appearance where they might properly be awaited, the flow of his thought seems to have carried the composer

away from them in sheer forgetfulness; again, they reenter in a fabric of marvelous and close instrumental cohesiveness. As master of orchestral writing Strauss stands in "Elektra" again preeminent, his technical command of material is supreme, but this serves only more harshly to accentuate the emotional monotony of its contents.

With the entrance of *Orest*, after considerably more than an hour of waiting, the short scene in which *Elektra* recognizes her brother is acclaimed by Strauss' adherents as holding music of a transcendent beauty, a concession that others will make with moderation, and in part because of the sense of relief that it brings with it.

But even this is escaped from in the fresh rush of hate which overwhelms *Elektra* with the realization that now, in *Orest*, the murderers of her father, *Agamemnon*—her mother *Klytaemnestra* and that mother's paramour, *Aegisth*—will find the instrument of vengeance. That vengeance meted, *Elektra* dances in a blood-soaked orgy of joy, and one hour and three-quarters of elemental fury is completed.

But even a performance of "Elektra" may hold humorous situations from in front of the curtain. At the close of a Berlin presentation at the Royal Opera, I asked of the man next me: "How did you like it?"

"I have paid for a ticket," he returned grimly, "to have my ears boxed."

Reports cabled to America after the première of the opera at Dresden told that the audience was "stunned"; my neighbor unwittingly gave me a better key to its probable mental attitude than published chronicles had furnished.

It is not to the hurling of orchestral masses that we object to-day, nothing is too massive, nothing too tremendous; in this aspect the very existing conditions would seem to make a music of the future impossible, for it is all that any composer may hope to achieve to if he lives up to the present. But it is the superlative monotony, the inhuman excess of a theme such as "Elektra," interminably spun out, and the

clamorous insistence, the ugliness, with which Strauss has faithfully reflected it, that are both tiresome and revolting. He has gone beyond anything that he has hitherto attempted, like a man who, after giving us good literature, or at least that which by many is regarded as such, has suddenly turned to producing theories lacking of any sanely illuminating idea, merely that he may create a something different.

Having rid his mind of this mental bile, there is reason to believe that Strauss will return to his logical road of development, and give us an opera creditably worthy of his talent. He, himself, it would seem, recognized that he had gone his full length in this present cul-de-sac when he went into seclusion after the earlier "Elektra" performances to write an opera along other lines "strongly in contrast."

The audience in attendance at Berlin was not "stunned," it scarcely seemed puzzled; it listened intently, with that kind of intent that an audience gives when the price of seats is advanced, which on that occasion happened to be at the rate of sixty cents each in the parquet, and to the Berlin mind sixty cents engenders much interest.

But the fall of the curtain brought little applause; at the outset there had been much to awaken attention, but the message of hate had fully exhausted patience so long before its completion, that it had grown attenuated in impression; the monotony had become indescribable, the symphony had grown to be one interminable repetition of F.

No singer who has undergone the mental torture of memorizing a rôle in "Elektra" will ever likely admit the disappointment of the work; it would not be human to do so. Not one of the artists of whom I have learned but sings in the work unwillingly more than once in so often. The wear and tear, mentally, physically, and vocally is to them too unnatural. Beneath that outer expression of awe professionally demanded by "Elektra," as something more difficult to master than any tight-rope gyrations, there is a very

clear, though unspoken, intimation of tired, apathetic endurance. For "Elektra" is leagues behind any art interest that "Salome" might arouse in its interpreters.

In Berlin, the attitude of musicians is curious. Beyond those who champion "Elektra's" cause unreasoning and unreasonable, many appear loth to say anything, as if the power behind it all were deep-rooted and vindictive, and silence meant self-protection. With a very large class of the public there is a well-founded feeling that being a German product, it is necessarily a great one.

To say, though, that outside of Germany "Elektra" and "Salome" will find seldom place in any repertoire within a very few years, would not seem to require great gift of prophecy, though "Salome" will vanish less quickly than the later opera, for in it lies appeal on the picturesque side. Both have been successes of curiosity, fluttering into notoriety on reams of paper. In America "Parsifal" enjoyed the same methods, and what place does "Parsifal" occupy now? Scarcely the one that either Wagner or his adherents fondly demanded.

This does not infer any undervaluation of Strauss' tremendous talent, but that in opera his ability in musically reflecting the text is as complete as his power of proper selection of a libretto is lacking. The mentally sane and sound do not appear to be his choice in literature. Like a child, he seems to glory in tales of horror and violence. It cannot be that he seeks to gain notoriety through the repellent because it is the unusual—only a talentless man would do that—but merely that intellectually, thus far, his literary taste has not got beyond the crude choice of degenerate subjects, startling and revolting enough before they are intensified by musical setting, and of a quality that gain attention through ultra-grotesqueness rather than from any intrinsic value.

The curious part of all this is that such choice is not remotely in keeping with Strauss and his attitude in daily

life. Those who know him closely speak of his many lovable qualities. He is unusually pious, devoted to his home, his wife, and his family. In association in general he is reserved, of remarkable poise and cool self-possession. His favorite relaxation from writing is whist and skat, which absorb him for hours so completely that he gets away from all thought of composing.

On the several occasions that I have met him, he has been thoroughly natural, even when under strain as to the manner of acceptance awaiting his music by the public, as, for instance, during the Strauss festival in London some six years ago, between the final rehearsal and the opening concert.

Again, at the Royal Opera in Berlin, between acts, when he was conducting, he excused himself for not seeing me before the performance, as promised, as he had been helping his wife in the final preparations for summer departure, and seeing her off at the station; quite as if packing and like family duties were as much a part of life with a noted composer and royal conductor as they would be with John Smith or any other representative of manhood.

When he talks of his work, his appreciation of the place he holds in the world is undisguised in his manner. Knowing his position, and thoroughly aware that the world knows it, too, it is evidently not worth his while to veil the knowledge.

In his intercourse with singers he has the faculty of endearing himself by this same trait of naturalness, and the one of good comradeship added, and this latter is a most valuable asset when one considers the demands he makes upon his interpreters.

One day in rehearsal he sang several passages from "Elektra"; his voice is even more cracked and grating than are conductors' voices commonly. Then he gravely said: "That is the way that I want you to sing it."

The singers were silent a moment, then burst into laughter.

"If we sang it that way, you would murder us," said one, and then he laughed with them.

At another time, also in rehearsal, he made a mistake; every one on the stage stopped and stared.

"We all make mistakes sometimes," he called out boyishly, "even I make mistakes." And he joined in the joke on himself.

There is one person who claims the right to dismount him from his Pegasus when flights at times, as with the best, are a trifle too high—his wife, Frau Strauss-de Ahna, the singer. Perhaps, too, there is back of it all a not unfeminine desire, on seeing the centre of interest too long monopolized, to impress the knowledge that others are in existence. And her methods are sometimes unique. She it was who once interrupted him sweepingly in a large gathering, in the midst of a fervid dissertation with: "What do you know about it? Who are you? The son of a poor musician. I, I am an officer's daughter. Keep still."

Strauss laughed gayly; perhaps only the humorous side touched him.

If Frau Strauss sings well or less so, as sometimes happens, he invariably goes to her and says: "You did beautifully." His loyalty, apparently, never harbors an instant's resentment.

Strauss' financial ability and appreciation of money are, we know, regarded as sufficiently phenomenal to have won for him the sobriquet of "richest of composers." Even the smallest details of his work are hedged in with rights and protections; the libretto and music-guide to "Elektra," for example, bear so many protecting notices that only one possible fails: "Do not breathe the air between these open pages, it is within copyright limits."

Yet there is an artistic, inconsequential side, even to his money getting. I recall once that Bock, the Berlin publisher, gloomily told me that he had paid such a sum for the "Domestic Symphony" that he feared he would never recover it; that the composer had promised him his next twelve songs, by which he hoped to recoup himself, and that, thus far, he had not received one.

"I have two songs, indeed, almost

three, ready for Bock," said Strauss somewhat later. "But when he will get the rest, Heaven knows! Perhaps in a year, perhaps three; it all depends upon the spirit that moves me to write them."

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose one-act tragedy furnished the book for Strauss' opera, was born in Vienna in 1874; belongs to the "ultra-modern" writers, and, by a great unfeeling horde, is pronounced a neurotic. Gabriel d'Annunzio is his idol. He has written a mass of poetry and a number of plays, the more important among them being adaptations of antique ones.

In certain of his literary product there is not lacking a sense of the exaggerated "I," as happens with poets who seek within themselves sole material for remodeling a world that has got on for some years without them.

But it is, at this moment, only to his "Elektra" that we need confine our interest. His tragedy is announced as a free endeavor at reincarnating the "Elektra" of Sophocles, in consonance with modern ideas. And it is an entirely different "Elektra" from that of Sophocles that he has managed to create, one robbed of womanliness, with the veil of the ideal torn away, leaving only a skeleton of revenge and hate to clothe with music.

"That it is not the *Elektra* of the antique, may be the reproach of some critics," says a Von Hofmannsthal essayist, "but the author can reply: 'I see her thus.'"

And it will also be recalled as coincidence in Strauss' little literary excursions after the ideal, that Wilde also saw Salome "thus."

As in the antique tragedy, *Klytämnestra*, *Elektra*, *Chrysóthemis*, *Aegisth*, *Orest*, and the *Guardian* figure as principal characters; *Pylades* is omitted, and for the chorus, a group of maids and women substituted.

The first setting represents the inner court of the palace, enclosed by the rear side of that building and the low-ceiled servants' quarters, the whole in a dull, cold gray. Against the background is a single cloud, stationary

throughout the performance, changing from white to a blood-red before the close.

The scene opens with a dialogue between the maids and an overseeress, disclosing the tigerish type of *Elektra*, whom they are expecting. Presently on *Elektra's* entrance she delivers in a long monologue—fifty-eight lines of blank verse—the ghastly story of her father's murder, when “thy blood ran over thine eyes, and the bath steamed with thy blood”; tells of her hate of his murderers, and cries for vengeance that will let her dance with “high-lifted knees, step by step, over corpses.”

There you have a portrait of the lady, painted in red, by herself.

A scene follows between *Elektra* and her sister *Chrysothemis*, the gentle *Chrysothemis*, the single human being in the cast who wanders from chamber to chamber, filled with horror and unrest, longing to live her life as woman should. She brings the news of their brother *Orest's* rumored death.

Elektra then enters on twelve pages of libretto with *Klytämnestra*, a woman haunted by fear, seeking the comfort of torches that frighten her guilty soul by the very shadows that they cast. She is dressed in dark violet; covered with jewels and charms; “her eyelids swollen”; a creature of triple-distilled hysteria.

Affrighted by her dreams, *Klytämnestra*, willing to offer a human sacrifice to be rid of them, receives the enigmatical reply from *Elektra* that when the next victim falls by the axe she will dream no more, and then foretells her mother's death, “the axe swimming in blood, the shriek for help strangled on her lips,” tells it in every dreamable detail.

Succeeding this intimate family tête-à-tête, *Elektra* beseeches *Chrysothemis* that, with *Orest* dead, they two commit the double murder. Refusing to accede, she is cursed by *Elektra*, who swears to do the deed alone.

Orest now enters, unrecognized by *Elektra*, until his servant and attendants fall on their knees and kiss his hands and feet. *Orest* declares his in-

tention to murder, and in that moment is called within to his mother. As he disappears with his attendants, *Elektra* cries: “I have not given him the axe! They are gone, and I have not given him the axe. There are no gods in heaven!” Then, as the freezing death yells of *Klytämnestra* come from the palace, she shouts: “Strike her again!”

With a trace of humor all unconscious, come the words given *Chrysothemis* as she enters in this instant: “Something must have happened.”

A brief scene of fright by the maids and *Aegisth* enters, crossing to go into the palace. He inquires of *Elektra* whether *Orest's* rumored death is longer a matter of doubt, and is answered: “No doubt is possible,” as, taking a torch from its ring by the doorway, to light his steps, she begins a quasidance.

His murder follows almost on the moment of his exit, and *Elektra*, bursting into triumphant joy and gloating, dances her “high-kneed step over corpses,” which, let it be promptly added, has nothing in it either remotely sensuous or alluring.

If an artist should put on canvas, in symbolism, this “*Elektra*,” he would paint a steel-gray rock covered with writhing snakes, and shapeless, slimy crawling things, and below it a pool of blood, in which floated vague human corpses slit with wounds.

In Germany to-day the fingers of art are numb from carrying a musket. In Strauss lies its main musical hope; in “*Elektra*” he has realistically reflected the text of Von Hofmannsthal in a molten stream of monotony.

Three American singers play important part in the presentations of “*Elektra*”: Miss Marcelle, in the title rôle in Vienna, after all available singers at the Imperial Opera had refused it; Miss Edyth Walker, at one time engaged at the Metropolitan in New York, and now a mezzo-soprano, sings the part in Hamburg, and Miss Frances Rose, of Denver, is the *Chrysothemis* of the Berlin presentation.

To Miss Rose was also offered the part of *Elektra*, which she refused in preference for the one she interprets.

At the request of Strauss she sang *Salome* at the first Wiesbaden performance, and in addition many times in Berlin.

She is a charming personality, of unusual beauty, and her figure lends itself with admirable, plastic grace to classic portrayals. Her studies were made entirely in America, with Mr. Underner at Cleveland, and she sprang at once into favor with her first appearance at Breslau, where she was pronounced, "one of the stars that fall from heaven once in so often." Nor is the estimate an exaggeration, for her powers, as displayed in *Chrysanthemis*, should fit her for very high rank in her own country.

Her rôles include the leading soprano parts in "Aida," "L'Africaine," "Les Huguenots," and "Carmen," and the *Senta*, *Elizabeth*, *Venus*, *Elsa*, *Sieglinde*, *Santuzza*, and *Salome*, with a preference for the modern French and Italian genre which the German repertoire precludes.

It was in "Carmen" that Richard Strauss, who conducted the performance, first heard her, and the next morning brought her the *Salome* music, as proof of his confidence; he, himself, coaching her in it.

Miss Rose had this to say of the experience: "*Salome* is something that one stands before and wonders. To one who has never studied that part, *Elektra* would seem like being let into a madhouse. But taken in sequence to the other work, it becomes less difficult. It is a case of one, two, grab for a note; one, two, three, grab for another; one, two, three, four, grab again.

"In 'Elektra' Strauss has written enormous phrases, not only musical, but verbal, and that is what makes it so trying; they cannot be broken, yet one must breathe.

"He is a charming man to study with, never impatient of mood, saying, 'I meant it thus and so'—a lovely fellow. At the desk he is a vampire, he draws the blood out of our veins, but I love him. In his conducting he drags

one along with him, whether one wills it or not; he carries one, he cradles the music in his hands. He has his moods, as we all have, but with the right one he is an inspiration to every singer."

As instance of the Americans appearing at the Berlin Royal Opera, only last season "Tannhäuser" was given with the *Elizabeth*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Landgraf*, all Americans; very often "Madame Butterfly" is sung by a cast entirely American. And thus, one can scarcely wonder that a German singer caustically remarked the other day at rehearsal, when he observed a group of Americans chatting together: "Where is our English prompter today?"

With a bent for wit, Edouard von Strauss, one of the conductors, has dubbed it the "Berlin Royal American Opera."

But it has taken on its complement of American singers because of their good voices, their superior vocal methods to the Germans, their do-or-die spirit in overcoming obstacles, and their quick adaptability in rôles as well as in situations.

Now and again an ugly line creeps into the newspapers with the appearance of "yet another American"; some German singers are not averse to harboring resentment. Otherwise, undoubtedly, even more Americans would be retained there.

The method of making engagements obliges each voice to pass the scrutiny of all three conductors, of the General-Intendant Baron von Hülsen, and lastly the emperor himself, whose signature renders finally valid the contract. It is upon their merit and because they are better than any others obtainable that these many Americans have been engaged. The spirit displayed in the matter by those in authority is both fair and charming.

Outside this limit, within the pale of malcontents, one would wish sometimes a recollection of the mass of German singers that have had welcome in New York, and that in art, as in hospitality, reciprocity is a gracious ornament.

The OTHER WOMAN'S GAME

Jane W.
Guthrie



MILY WAYNE frequently assured herself that the game of bridge had been her most useful weapon through the jungle of society, which, being young, she had only recently entered, and where it is, by means of encounters savage and suave, we all acquire practice in social warfare and the knowledge of life enabling us if not to best our fellows, at least to better ourselves.

And not only had it proved to be a weapon for battering down obstacles and opening closed pathways, but it offered to Emily the only means that she had ever discovered of confounding Mrs. Warren, the mother of Serena, her bosom friend; for although Mrs. Warren employed every spare moment in effort, she had never yet succeeded in playing an even or resourceful game; nevertheless, driven by an irresistible impulse, akin to the desire of the moth for the star, she was forever tempted to try her skill.

Emily, on the contrary, by evenings spent at home with her father and mother, and a fourth, if one could be found, had secured practice and a schooling in applied philosophy demonstrated by bridge—control of her temper, diplomacy in social intercourse, the bewildering and undoing of an opponent by tactics too subtle for recognition, and clever countering in defense,

all of which to Mrs. Warren were caviare to the general.

It was Emily's quickened and acquired training in observation which prompted her to believe that Mrs. Warren's husband, doubtless without his own consent, was a candidate for her father's cherished position on one of the governor's advisory boards; and knowing that her father looked upon this position as an especial and personally deserved honor, she had tried to point out to him the undermining influences which she was sure were being directed by Mrs. Warren to prevent his reappointment, that Mr. Warren might secure this satisfaction for Mrs. Warren's restless and consuming ambition. Emily's father, however, an erudite professor of quiet life, a polished gentleman, but not a politician, had grown by continued service through two or three terms of office under succeeding governors, and by generally acknowledged fitness for the place, to consider it his own. He also regarded a family friendship with the Warrens as a supreme negative against any such suspicions.

"But what guarantee have you, father, upon which to base your surety of reappointment? What effort have you made to secure it? You know that you are apt to become so absorbed in your professional duties that you may have forgotten to obtain definite assurances."

"Certainly not, my dear." Mr.

Wayne spoke briskly, almost impatiently, that his daughter should question the obvious, the foregone conclusion of his reappointment by a newly inaugurated official. "I have paid my respects to the governor. It is true that I did not find him at home, but I have left the conduct of my claims in the hands of my friends, those who understand these things far better than I do. I have held office long enough to know more about the details of the transactions of the board than any one else, and I have been faithful in my administration." He drew himself up quite stiffly erect in his chair. "Besides, Mr. Warren"—he waved him aside with a sweeping gesture—"Mr. Warren is absolutely incapable of appreciating the responsibilities of the position—he is far too weak a candidate to consider. Cease to bother about it any longer. I desire the place, of course. It is a distinction, and I enjoy the mental recreation that it affords me, and—I trust to my past record." Mr. Wayne's voice, his pose, his superior smile were almost sublime.

Emily looked at him with tender eyes, but she did not "cease to bother about it." She knew Mrs. Warren, but she did not know the new governor, and the new governor, by Mr. Wayne's own confession, "knew not Joseph," her father. Moreover, her suspicions were so brilliantly sustained and verified by Mrs. Warren's visit to herself the next morning that she felt called upon to take an active if uninvited part in that lady's campaign.

"I came to tell you, Emily," Mrs. Warren was saying—she wore her best frock, her most ingratiating and intimate smile—"that Mrs. Ballentine is bringing the governor's sister to the club meeting at my house this afternoon, and that, you see, will fill the vacancy for which I asked you. Of course, you know, Emily, that as one of the original, one of the charter members of the club, Mrs. Ballentine has a perfect right to ask a guest if she notifies me in time and I have made no other arrangements, and—the governor's sister!" Mrs. Warren caught

her breath ecstatically. Then, in a lowered voice, full of import, she added confidentially: "We are so anxious to be kind to the governor; he is a bachelor, supposed to be inconsolable over the loss of an early love. He has admired my daughter Serena greatly, I believe"—Mrs. Warren's abstracted, visionary gaze, over Emily's head, of complacent maternal satisfaction was beautiful to see—"thinks her so pretty." Mrs. Warren's eyes, as if they still held a picture of Serena's pink-and-white complexion, soft yellow hair, round blue eyes, and fat little body, fell with a sigh to Emily, who offered her such a sombre contrast with her tall thinness, dark dreamy eyes, warm creamy skin, and clouds of brown hair, which in the sunlight shone with red threads and strange harmonies. Again she sighed. "And so—and so—"

Here, under Emily's eyes, Mrs. Warren began to hesitate, to flounder, even wallow in the fatal bog of explanations. "We are so anxious to make a good impression on the governor's sister—my husband's aspirations—" She rolled her eyes as if to hint that state secrets were on the tip of her tongue and prudently withheld; but this exalted condition faded to one of anxious concern as her mind returned to the present as a consideration of immediate consequence, and her manner begged, even implored Emily's usual good-humored compliance, her generous perception of the situation.

Emily, however, met her guest's eyes firmly. She was recalling, as she observed her, that her mother had always called her "The Trampler," averring complainingly that "she tramps into the garden of good breeding with hobnail shoes, and treads down all the tender young and growing shoots of human intercourse and willfully breaks off all the blossoms of gentle words and kindly thought and throws them on the ground to wilt and die." So she refused to respond to these embarrassed explanations, she refused to efface herself; but after gazing at Mrs. Warren steadily, unsmilingly, for a few moments, in much the same fashion that

a scientist regards an insect impaled for observation, she said gravely, inquiringly, stating facts as they really were:

"You asked me to fill a vacancy at your bridge club this afternoon. You have come to tell me that you do not want me; that you have asked some one else? You expect me to withdraw?"

"Oh, no—no, Emily! How crudely you put it! I did not ask some one else. Mrs. Ballentine is bringing the governor's sister. Don't you understand? The governor's sister is just getting settled here. She is, you know, at the head of his household, and a stranger meriting social attention. It's the club, this afternoon, Emily—the club. Both Serena and I, being members, are obliged to play—otherwise—a common card party, either one of us would drop out for you—but the club!" Mrs. Warren pronounced these cabalistic words in much the same way and with the same exalted fervor that the *religicuse* uses in speaking of "the Church!"

"It is very unexpected—very, I assure you. I hope you understand. I knew you would. You are always so lovely, so generous. How beautiful your flowers are this spring. Have you any slugs on your roses? No? Well—good-by. Next time, dear Emily. So good of you to understand."

Mrs. Warren had turned to go, feeling that her best frock, her most winning smile were covering with distinction an uncomfortable exit, when Emily's soft voice restrained her. She turned eagerly.

"What!" she cried. "'A distinguished guest for bridge this evening?' And you want my husband and myself to come in and play? Why, we would be delighted. Delighted! Oh," huffily, "if you won't tell me who it is." Then ingratiatingly: "You know, Emily, how much rather I would really have you than any one else, but we have just got to have the governor's sister."

Emily had a swift vision of herself and the governor's sister placed in the

balances; she rode high in the air, forced there by the heavy weight of the governor's sister's preponderance of desirability on the opposite beam; and watching her departing guest's exit with sparkling eyes and twinkling lights of fun on her face, she was stirred to further humor by the expression of the embarrassed back, upon which were written surpriséd, chagrin, incredulity, and curiosity as she hastily turned the sheltering corner of the next street.

Mendacious, neither by temperament nor principle, but having assured Mrs. Warren that her father and mother were expecting a distinguished guest for bridge that evening, Emily felt it imperatively incumbent on her to provide the guest and the game, though previous to this visit neither of them had had any place in her consciousness as entities.

And that it must be the governor was emphasized by the nature of the disclosures, though neither Emily nor her mother had any acquaintance with this newly acquired medium of the voice of the people; and her father—she could not use him as a lever. This small convention, however, Emily brushed aside as beneath her consideration, while she consoled herself with the trite reflection that fortune favors the brave, since verifying of her announcement to Mrs. Warren was a necessity.

She had planned no method of approach or attack, realizing that no young woman in her sober senses would appear at the office of state and demand any man's presence at a given place and time without some excuse for such presumption, yet, being a woman, and trusting to the spirit of adventure with the hope of youth which prompted it, she was walking down Capitol Hill at four o'clock, the hour at which the governor, by common report, left the cares of state behind him in his office and set forth on a swift automobile flight over country roads, the better to clear his brain of the cobwebs of political intrigue and the complications of statecraft. And just at this hour, exact in habit, he stood at the top of

the long flight of broad steps leading from the State House to the sidewalk at the curb of which his chauffeur held his panting, restlessly expectant machine.

The flanking plaza and the broad, long sweep of steps were shining white in the May sunshine, while hedges of lilacs in the park near by lent their exquisite perfume to the soft, breeze-blown atmosphere, delicate, fugitive, fleeting as the dream of youth. The governor stood drawing on his gloves, breathing in the beauty of the scene and in association recalling his own youth, his own visions of springtime and perfume-laden May. He stood with his back to the massive stone pile, the State House, himself the official expression of it, while it seemed to him to epitomize his ambitions—hard, cold, pitiless, and humanly unsatisfying.

He was a tall, imposing-looking man with a young face, a crown of prematurely gray hair, clear, dark, sophisticated, and penetrating eyes, about which there were lines hinting of a keen sense of humor, while the round of his chin against his strong, square jaw spoke insistently of sentiment, qualities at war frequently with his ambitions, but sentiment, his cool eyes said, hitherto held in check by those ambitions.

Sauntering slowly down the broad flight of steps, he stood for a few moments on the last one, his gaze resting idly, somewhat indifferently at first, on the figure of a young girl standing out against the white flagging and the brilliant sunshine, and noticeably conspicuous as the only passer-by at that moment. She seemed to him to be a vision of spring, the embodiment of May or one of those slender, perfume-laden lilac bushes in the park near by. She wore a lilac-colored gown, and a pale green hat, lilac-trimmed, redolent of youth and springtime, the tender harmonies of the season. The governor gazed at her contemplatively—youth is always lovely to middle age, and the governor had turned the fortieth milestone. The glowing sunshine painted her a figure of life and

hope and happiness as she moved across his pathway with a faint, maid-
enly self-consciousness infinitely attractive to this man of the world who had known many women, many accomplished women, many charming and worldly women, as sophisticated, as cold, and as glittering as himself; but—this young girl, the embodiment of spring, was different. She was a whisper of days long dead, of emotions that had long been as dust to him. She seemed to typify the day, the season, youth, uncalculating youth.

Just as she got opposite him where he stood on the last step waiting for her to pass, her foot turned, she gave a slight cry, wavered, put out her hand toward him with a frightened look as if seeking support to keep from falling, and the governor, springing forward, caught her as she turned a blushing, embarrassed, half-frightened glance up into his face.

"Why do we ever wear shoes like that?" she asked, with a petulant, self-accusatory tone to her voice as she thrust out a slender, graceful foot encased in a high-heeled suede shoe just the color of her gown. "They will always turn going downhill."

"But have you hurt yourself?" the governor asked solicitously; those dark eyes, that slender figure, the sweet mouth—everything about her speaking of the almost pathetic girlishness so infinitely appealing to a man's sense of protection. "You must let me drive you wherever you are going. You should not walk on that foot." She was standing on one foot, as she tested, tried the other. "Come. Get in my machine. I'll drive you." He urged, pushed, led, half-carried her to the motor while he took the wheel from the chauffeur. "Now, where?" He turned to the girl who sat beside him, her face suffused with blushes.

"I am Emily Wayne, the daughter of Alexander Wayne," she said, "and if you will drive me home," giving him the street and the number, "my father will be glad to thank you."

Wayne—Alexander Wayne! The name was insistently in his mind. Ah,

yes, he remembered. Some one else wanted the place Wayne had held on one of the boards for a number of terms. Mrs. Warren, he had heard, was moving heaven and earth to secure it for her husband, and great pressure was being brought to bear in her interest. He must take up that matter for consideration soon; meantime, he must send for Mr. Wayne for conference with him, the better to make the best decision.

"So you are Alexander Wayne's daughter?" The governor smiled down into the sweet, dark eyes upturned to his with an expression he found difficult to read. "Then I think I should like to meet your father. No, I won't go in this afternoon, I am going to drive some men, but I believe I have promised to drop into the club to-night to take a hand at bridge for a while, and—" He paused and thought a moment. "If you will allow me, I will stop in after dinner, on my way downtown, and find out about that ill-behaved foot of yours and meet your father and have a little talk with him."

The governor's smile was most charming. It had won him more friends and more political honors than he could justly estimate.

"We can give you game of bridge." There was a flattering eagerness in the girlish voice. "My father and mother and I play almost every evening. Ah, do give us this evening. My father and mother both play a good game."

"And you?" They had stopped at the house and were still sitting in the machine as they talked. Emily turned her head aside, the lovely curve of her throat in the line from the ear fell upon the governor's vision; the graceful carriage of the head and shoulders revealed itself; the warm, sweet color on the round of the cheeks was beauty's own. "And you?" repeated the governor.

She flashed a brilliant, laughing look at him, her eyes were shining, her white teeth gleaming in the dusky glow of her face where the color flamed up over her throat and cheeks, up—up to her great, dark, beautiful eyes and

over her forehead. "You will have to find out for yourself," she laughed. "You would not want me to tell you how I play, would you? Do people ever tell the truth about themselves?"

"Then I will break my engagement at the club and come and find out for myself. May I?" he ventured.

"Would you? Would you?" she cried; and in her eagerness, her hand was laid lightly on his own, a mere featherweight. "Ah, do!" coaxingly, "Do!" And then, as if realizing her own impetuosity, she laughed and blushed again that lovely slow flush that crept up—up over the cheeks and above the eyes, over the forehead, and with a touch of shyness, almost embarrassment, she quickly withdrew her hand and prepared to get out of the machine.

"Of course I will," he answered positively, almost gayly. "Of course I will. There, mind the step. Don't come down hard on that foot. What nonsensical little shoes. No wonder they refused to do duty on a hill." He helped her up the steps and said a laughing "*Auf Wiederschen*" to her at the door.

The Warrens, as usual, were late in getting to the Waynes that evening. They found the governor playing with Emily and her mother and father; and, having been playing for more than an hour, he had evidently gauged the players and their game to his entire satisfaction. They played his game. A heart convention on a doubled no trump and a discard from strength, not weakness. He was rather disturbed by the entrance of the Warrens, though polite; but clearly annoyed when Emily withdrew from the table to give her place to Mrs. Warren and established herself at a small table and cribbage with Mr. Warren, who, with a feeble, somewhat silly explanatory smile assured them all that bridge was an impossibility to him, as he couldn't keep the run of the cards in his head.

It was not long before there were signs of evident dissatisfaction at the larger table. Mrs. Warren insisted on the short-suit convention on the dou-

bled no trump, and the discard from weakness, and they were playing it. But the governor had grown restless and fidgety, and Emily was made aware of ominous quiet on the part of her mother and father, while Mrs. Warren's voice rose at the end of every hand in justification and explanation.

Finally, the governor in a fit of only half-restrained exasperation, threw down the hand that he held. "Miss Wayne," he called. "Will you come here? Will you just look at that hand?" He spread it out with an air of triumphant gloom, as if he had reached the nadir of despair. "That was a good hand, a first-rate hand; but I defy any one to make anything out of this plagued fashion of short suits and the discard from weakness. One is bad enough, but oh, Lord—both of them!" He ran his hand through his hair in whimsical desperation. "I had a magnificent hand a little while ago and doubled on a no-trump declaration, and my partner opened it with a short suit instead of the high heart, when I held the ace and king with a fine black suit." He sighed with remembered anguish. "I don't like that game and I can't play it. Here, you take my hand and play with your mother, while Mr. Warren and I look on. If you can prove to Mrs. Warren the folly of the short-suit convention, I'll—I'll give you anything you ask, anything—even to the half of my kingdom. I want to see some one at it who knows more about it than I do."

Emily laughed and took the hand, but the gleam in her eyes and the soft glow of color that crept up her cheek were visible signs of excitement. She knew what it meant to play against her father, who, no matter whether he approved of the conventions, would play the game with skill and finesse. She was on her mettle and she straightened up in her chair, the lovely, staglike carriage of her head more noticeably perceptible, while her pale yellow gown against the soft, dusky pallor of the slender round of her throat made the high light in the picture of youth and hope and courage and happiness.

They played evenly, without much incident, until the rubber, with game all, the score twelve to eighteen in favor of Mrs. Warren the dealer, Mrs. Wayne being the leader, and Emily third hand with Mr. Wayne's hand dummy. Running over the cards, Emily's eyes shone beneath her downcast lids, there were possibilities in that hand; but when Mrs. Warren made a no-trump declare, she sat forward almost eagerly and took a swift mental summary of the situation. The governor was sitting beside her watching her play, his presence there like an electric thrill, a call to her pride. She looked carefully at her hand, it photographed itself on her mind. She held seven clubs to the ace, knave, ten; king, ten, eight of hearts; king, knave, ten of spades, and no diamonds. It was something more than a hand to gamble on with that long black suit and two good reentry cards. Mrs. Warren, in her haste to make out before the deal fell to her opponents, might be making a declaration to the score, but again, considering the weakness in the red suits in this hand, she might have a genuinely good no-trump hand. It were worth while to risk the chances.

Mrs. Wayne's gentle voice broke the tense stillness of the players: "May I play?"

"I double." Emily answered quickly. Surely, her mother's short suit was clubs!

But Mrs. Wayne did not lead clubs. Holding seven, four, five, two of hearts; knave, six, five, four, three, two of diamonds; queen, five of clubs, and the deuce of spades, she led her singleton spade; while Mrs. Warren, the dealer, holding ace, knave, nine, three of hearts; king, queen, eight, seven of diamonds; the king of clubs, and the nine, eight, six, three of spades, saw the dummy go down with queen, six of hearts; ace, ten, nine of diamonds; nine, seven, four of clubs, and ace, queen, seven, five, four of spades. She should have played her ace of spades and taken command of the situation at once; but she could not resist holding up her ace, and played her queen,

feeling so sure of the odd and perhaps more in her combined hands. As she put down the queen, Emily covered with her king, taking the trick. At once then she led out her ace of clubs. It caught the king second hand. Mrs. Wayne with the queen, noting Emily's play of the ace, read her correctly. This was Emily's long hand upon which she had doubled, and the ace meant seven in hand. She threw her queen on the trick to unblock. The governor almost whistled his admiration, but he restrained his enthusiasm, and wondered how many women would have the wit to do that.

The rest of the hand played itself, and when they had finished with the odd and the game to the good before Mrs. Warren had touched her combined hands of picture cards, there was such a sparkle in the eyes that Emily raised to the governor, such a glow in her cheeks that every one with the exception of the Warrens laughed at her. Mrs. Warren was in the sulks and Mr. Warren was asleep in a near-by chair.

The governor had risen to his feet in his excitement as he watched the play. "By Jove! You did do it! But—" He shook his head. "You were taking big chances."

"But that's the game!" Emily cried. "To take big chances to win!"

Then the governor laughed as he realized the meaning of the sparkle in her eyes; but still he protested amusedly: "You didn't play my game. You played Mrs. Warren's game—the short suit."

"But I played the game, didn't I?" asked Emily quickly, laughingly. "I played the game. My father would disown me if I did anything else." She slipped her hand affectionately into that of her father as he stood just at her elbow. "And I knew I could depend on mother. If she had used the heart convention with that hand, Mrs. Warren would have scored on us before we could have shown our cards. She could have thrown the lead there, so as to have made much of her diamonds and hearts."

"Still, I protest," he laughed. "It

isn't my game. You haven't proved anything to me but that you can play a hand that I cannot, and"—he looked at Mrs. Warren half-teasingly—"you've beaten Mrs. Warren at her own game." He turned whimsically to Emily. "You only more completely bewilder me. Mrs. Warren," he spoke to her now, "how can any poor man hope to understand the feminine temperament when he has offered to him such inconsistencies as Miss Wayne has shown me to-day? A young lady who can beat me at cards—me, a man! And yet, wearing such frivolous shoes that her very feet protest and ask assistance to get themselves taken back home when she goes out to walk!" He shook his head in mock despair.

"What! What is it? What do you mean?" Mrs. Warren could hardly get the words out in her excited curiosity.

"The governor is only making fun of me, Mrs. Warren," Emily explained. "I was walking downtown this afternoon, and I happened to have on very high-heeled shoes which turned with me as I was going down Capitol Hill. I twisted my ankle and the governor was good enough to drive me home in his machine. It was so trivial that one could hardly call it an accident." The blushes were all over Emily's face.

"An accident!" Mrs. Warren's whole face, her figure, the tones of her voice expressed shocked disbelief. "An accident!" she breathed, as an angry flush spread upward to the roots of her hair. "An accident!" She raised her protesting eyes to heaven as if to call down wrath upon such unmaidenly duplicity. And she was still breathing, "An accident!" with scornful indignation when she wakened Mr. Warren to take him home.

Even a walk through the dark, cool streets did not assuage her flaming anger. "An accident, indeed! Of course she planned the whole thing. I have never known of such depravity in one so young!"

"I heard the governor ask her and her mother and father to go driving with him to-morrow afternoon; and he made an engagement with Mr. Wayne

to be at his office to-morrow morning," bleated Mr. Warren timidly.

"Of course, he did." Mrs. Warren's voice was rasped to filelike sharpness. "I shall certainly forbid Serena, after this, having any friendship with Emily Wayne. She is a scheming, unscrupulous girl; and her game of bridge is absolutely indecent. It is more than immodest for a girl as young as Emily to play a game like that; and I am convinced that she plays for money, and has had practice that one might shudder to contemplate."

But Mrs. Warren's fears for Emily must have caused her more than shudders as, peering through her curtains the next afternoon, she saw the governor's touring car come whirling down the tree-lined streets. Mr. and Mrs. Wayne were in the tonneau, and Emily

sat beside the governor, who was driving. The delicate, fresh young leaves on the trees formed a background against which the girl's radiant face shone in passing. Her happy eyes were turned to the governor. She was listening to what he was saying to her; and he, as if welcoming a final convincing appeal to the sweetest things in life—the things his ambition had hitherto combatted—was talking to her, completely absorbed in her.

Youth was making its tender appeal to him, and all the world was as young as Emily's happy eyes, as young as her sweet, laughing lips, as young and fresh as May with her perfumes, her flowing harmonies, her delicate mists of green, her allurements, as young as—young as even the governor himself.



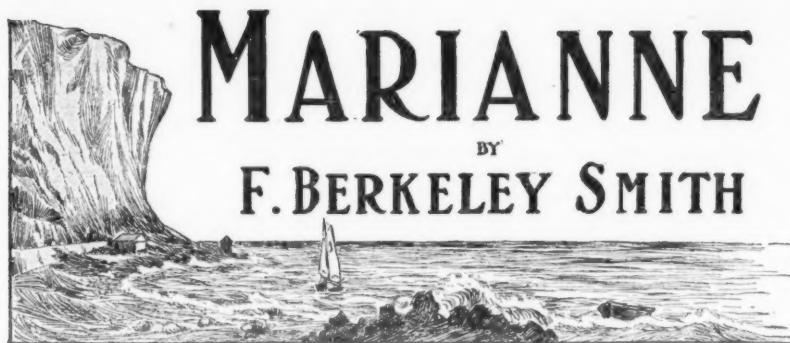
A CHALLENGE

COME, Worry, let us walk abroad to-day;
Let's take a little run along the way:
I know a sunny path that leads from Fear
Up to the lovely fields of Wholesome Cheer.
I'll race you there—I'm feeling fit, and strong.
So, Worry, come along!"

We started on our way, I and my Care.
I set the pace on through the springtime air,
But ere we'd gone a mile poor Worry stopped,
Tried hard to catch his breath, and then he dropped,
Whilst I went on—
An easy winner of that Marathon.

And since that day when vexed by any fear,
When Worry's come again with visage drear,
I've challenged him to join me in that race,
And found each time he could not stand the pace.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



MARIANNE

BY
F. BERKELEY SMITH



MONSIEUR le curé slid the long chair up to my fire, bent his straight black body forward, and, rubbing his chilled hands briskly before the blazing logs, announced with a smile of content:

"Marianne is out of jail."

"*Mon Dieu!*" I exclaimed. "And in midwinter! It must be cold enough in that hut of hers by the marsh—poor old girl!"

"And not a sou to be earned fishing," added the curé.

"Tell me about this last crime of hers," I said.

Monsieur le curé's face grew serious, then again the smile of content spread to the corners of his firm mouth.

"Ah! Nothing very gruesome," he confessed. Then after a moment's silence he continued slowly: "Her children needed shoes and warm things for the winter, Marianne stole sixty mètres of nets from the fishing crew at 'The Three Wolves'—she is hopeless, my friend."

With a vibrant gesture he straightened up in his chair and flashed his keen eyes to mine.

"For ten years I have tried to reform her," he declared. "Bah!" And he tossed the stump of his cigarette into the blaze.

"You nursed her once through the smallpox," said I, "when no one dared

go near her. The mayor told me so. I should think *that* would have long ago persuaded her to do something for you in return."

"We go where we are needed," he replied simply. "She will promise me nothing. One might as well try to make a faithful parishioner of a gypsy as to change Marianne for the better." He brought his fist down sharply on the broad arm of his chair. "I tell you," he went on tensely, "Marianne is a woman of no morals and no religion—a woman who allows no one to dictate to her save a gendarme with a warrant of arrest. Hardly a winter passes but she goes to jail. She is a confirmed thief, a bad subject, a vagabond," he went on vibrantly. "She can drink as no three sailors can drink; and yet you know as well as I do," he added, lowering his voice, "that there is not a mother in Pont du Sable who is as good to her children as Marianne. She has brought up her children to be honest and she keeps them clean. She has never stolen from her own village—it is a point of honor with her. Ah, you do not know Marianne as I know her."

"It seems to me you are growing enthusiastic over our worst vagabond," I laughed.

"I am," replied the curé frankly. "I believe in her; she is afraid of nothing. You see her as a vagabond—an outcast, and the next instant, *parbleu*, she forces out of you your camaraderie—

even your respect. You shake her by the hand, that straight old hag with her clear blue eyes, her square jaw, and her hard face! She who walks with the stride of a man, who is as supple and strong as a sailor, and who looks you squarely in the eyes and studies you calmly, at times disdainfully—even when drunk."

It was late when monsieur le curé left me alone by my fire. I cannot say "alone," for my cat—she, the "Essence of Selfishness"—was purring on my chest, and the spaniel lay asleep before the embers, his silky ears twitching in his dreams, little nightmares that made him cry to himself and slumber when they were over.

In this old Normand house of mine by the marsh, there comes a silence at this hour which is exhilarating. Out of these winter midnights come strange sounds. Whirring flights of sea fowl whistle over my roof, in late for a lodgings on the marsh. A heavy peasant's cart goes by, groaning in agony under the brake, and when the wind is from the sea, it is like a bevy of witches shrilling my doom down the chimney.

And so I sat up late, smoking a black pipe that gurgled in unison with the purring on my chest and the breathing of my dog, while I thought seriously of Marianne.

When Marianne was eighteen, they tell me, she was the prettiest girl in Pont du Sable; that is to say, she was prettier than Emilienne Daget at Barla-Rose, or than Berthe Pavoisier, the daughter of the miller at Tocqueville, who is now in Paris.

At eighteen, Marianne was slim and blonde; moreover, she was as bold as a hawk, and smiled as easily as she lied. At twenty, she was rated as a valuable member of any fishing crew that put out from the coast, for they found her capable during a catch, and steady in danger, always doing her share and a little more for those who could not help themselves. She is still doing it, for in her stone hut on the edge of the marsh that serves as shelter for her children

and her rough old self, she has been charitable and given a winter's lodging to three old wrecks of the sea.

The curé was right; Marianne had her good qualities. I was almost beginning to wonder to myself as I pulled drowsily at the black pipe if her good qualities did not outweigh her bad ones, when my spaniel rose upon his forelegs and yawned. The Essence of Selfishness awakened, flattened her ears, and emitted a high-keyed moan, for she hates him, poor little boy with the disposition of an angel. And so it was high time to send these children of mine to bed.

Marianne called her *ma belle petite*, though her real name was Yvonne—Yvonne Louise Tourneveau.

Yvonne kept her black eyes from early dawn until dark upon a dozen of Père Bourron's cows in her charge, who grazed on a long point of marsh, lush with salt grass, that lay sheltered back of the dunes fronting the open sea.

Now and then, when a cow strayed over the dunes onto the hard beach beyond to gaze stupidly at the breakers, the little girl's voice would become as authoritative as a boy's.

"*Eh ben, tu sais!*" she would shout as she ran to head the straggler off, adding some sound whacks with a switch until the cow decided to lumber back to the rest. "*Ah, mais!*" Yvonne would sigh as she seated herself again in the wire grass, tucking her firm bronzed legs under a patched skirt that had once served as a winter petticoat for the Mère Bourron.

Occasionally a trudging coastguard or a lone hunter in passing would call "*bonjour!*" to her, and since she was pretty, this child of fifteen, they would sometimes hail her with "*Ca va, ma petite?*" And Yvonne would flush and reply bravely: "*Mais oui, m'sicur, merci.*"

Since she was only a little girl with hair as black as a gypsy's, a ruddy olive skin, fresh young lips, and a well-knit, compact body, hardened by constant exposure to the sea air and sun, no one bothered their heads much

about her name. She was only a child who smiled when the passer-by gave her a chance, which was seldom, and when she did she disclosed teeth as white as the tiny shells on the beach.

There were whole days on the marsh when she saw no one.

At noon, when the cracked bell in the distant belfry of the gray church of Pont du Sable sent its discordant note quavering across the marsh, Yvonne drew forth a sailor's knife from where it lay tucked safe within the breast of her coarse chemise, and untying a square of blue cotton cloth, cut in two her portion of peasant bread, saving half the bread and half a bottle of Père Bourron's thinnest cider for the late afternoon.

There were days, too, when Marianne, coming up from the sea with her nets, stopped to rest beside the child and talk. Yvonne, having no mother whom she could remember, Marianne had become a sort of transient mother to her, which the incoming tide sometimes brought her and whom she would wait for with uncertain expectancy, often for days.

One afternoon in early spring, when the cows were feeding in the scant slanting shade of the dunes, Yvonne fell asleep. She lay out straight upon her back, her brown legs crossed, one wrist over her eyes. She slept so soundly that neither the breeze that had sprung up from the northeast, stirring with every fresh puff the stray locks about her small ears, or the sharp barking of a dog hunting rabbits for himself over the dunes, awakened her. Suddenly she became conscious of being grasped in a pair of strong arms, and awakening with a little scream, looked up into the grinning face of Marianne, who straightaway gave her a big, motherly hug until she was quite awake and then kissed her soundly on both cheeks, until Yvonne laughed over her fright.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!* But I was frightened," sighed the child, and sat up straight, smoothing back her tumbled hair. "*Oh! la! la!*" she gasped.

"They are beauties, *hein?*" ex-

claimed Marianne, nodding to an oozing basketful of mackerel; then, kneeling by the basket, she plunged her red hands under the slimy glittering mass of fish, lifting and dropping them that the child might see the average size in the catch.

"*Eh ben!*" declared Marianne. "Some day when thou art bigger, *ma petite*, I'll take thee where thou canst make some silver. There's half a louis' worth there if there's a soul!" She bent over them again, dressed as she was in a pair of fisherman's trousers cut off at the knees. There was a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes.

"One can play the lady on half a louis," she continued, covering her fish from the sun with her bundle of nets. "My man shall have a full bottle of the best to-night," she added, wiping her wet hands across her bare knees.

"How much 'cake' does that old crab of a Bourron pay thee?" she inquired, turning again to the child.

"Six sous a day—and then my food and lodging," confessed Yvonne.

"He won't ruin himself," muttered Marianne.

"They say the girl at the Three Wolves gets ten," said the child, with awe, "but thou knowest how—she must do the washing besides."

Marianne's square jaw shut hard. She glanced at Yvonne's patched skirt, the one that had been the Mère Bourron's winter petticoat, feeling its quality as casually as a fashionable dressmaker.

"*Sacristi!*" exclaimed she, examining a rent. "There's one door that the little north wind won't knock twice at before he enters. Keep still, *ma petite*, I've got thread and a needle."

She drew from her trousers' pocket a leather wallet, in which lay four two-sou pieces, an iron key, and a sail needle driven through a ball of linen thread. "It is easily seen thou art not in love," laughed Marianne, as she cross-stitched the tear. "Thou wilt pay ten sous for a ribbon gladly some day when thou art in love."

The child was silent while she sewed.

Presently she asked timidly: "One eats well there?"

"Where?"

"But thou knowest—*there*."

"In the prison?"

"*Mais oui*," whispered Yvonne.

"Of course," growled Marianne.

"One eats well; it is perfect. *Tiens!* We have the good soup, that is well understood, and now and then meat and rice."

"Oh!" exclaimed the child, in awe.

"*Mais oui*," assured Marianne, with a nod, "and prunes."

"Where is that—the prison?" ventured the child.

"It is very far," returned Marianne, biting off the thread, "and it is not for every one, either," she added, with a touch of pride. "Only I happen to be an old friend and know the judge."

"And how much does it cost a day, the prison?" asked Yvonne.

"Not *that*," replied Marianne, snipping her single front tooth knowingly with the tip of her nail.

"*Mon Dieu!* And that they give you all that for nothing!" exclaimed the child, in astonishment. "It is *chic*, that *hein?*" and she nodded her pretty head with decision. "Ah, *mais oui, alors!*" she laughed merrily.

"I must be going," announced Marianne. "My young ones will be wanting their soup."

She flattened her back against her heavy basket, slipped the straps under her armpits, and rose to her bare feet, the child passing the bundle of nets to her and helping her shoulder them to the proper balance.

"*Au revoir, ma belle petite*," she said, bending to kiss Yvonne's cheek; then, with her free hand, she dove into her trousers' pocket and drew out a two-sou piece. "*Tiens!*" she exclaimed, pressing the copper into the child's hand.

Yvonne gave a little sigh of delight. It was not often she had two sous all to herself to do what she pleased with, which doubles the delight of possession, don't you think so? Besides, the Mère Bourron kept her wages, or rather count of them, which was

cheaper, on the back page of a greasy book wherein were registered the births of calves.

"*Au revoir*," reiterated Marianne, and turned on her way to the village down the trail that wound through the salt grass, out to the road skirting the bay.

Yvonne watched her until she finally disappeared through a cut in the dunes that led to the main road.

The marsh lay in the twilight, the curlews were passing overhead bound for a distant mud flat for the night. "Courli! Courli!" they called, the old birds with a rasp, the young ones cheerfully, as one says *bousoir*. The cows, conscious of the fast approaching dark, were moving toward Yvonne. She stood still until they had passed her, then drove them slowly back to Père Bourron's, her two-sou piece clutched safe in her hand.

It was dark when she let down the bars of the orchard leading into the farm yard. Here the air was moist and heavy with the sharp odor of manure. A turkey gobbler and four timid hens, roosting in a low apple tree, stirred uneasily as the cows passed beneath them to their stable next to the kitchen—a stable with a long stone manger and walls two feet thick. Above the stable was a loft covered by a thatched roof. It was in a corner of this loft, in a large box filled with straw and provided with a patchwork quilt, that Yvonne slept.

A light from the kitchen window streamed across the muddy court. The Père and Mère Bourron were already at supper. The child bolted the stable door upon her herd and slipped into her place at table, with a timid "*Bonsoir, m'sieur, madame*" to her masters, which was acknowledged by a grunt from the Père Bourron and a spasm of coughing from his spouse.

The Mère Bourron, who had the dullish round eye of a pig that gleamed suspiciously when she became inquisitive, had supped well. Now and then she squinted over her fat jowls veined with purple, plying her mate with short, savage questions, for he had sold cattle

that day at the market at Bonville. Such evenings as these were always quarrelsome ones between the two, and as the little girl did not count any more than the chair she sat in, they argued openly over the day's sale. The best steer had brought less than the Mère Bourron had believed a shrewd possibility, even after a month's bargaining.

They at last ceased to argue, since the Mère Bourron had had the final word. Père Bourron sat with closed fists, opening one now and then to grasp the decanter and strengthen his coffee with applejack. Being a short, thickset little man, he generally sat in his blouse after he had eaten, with his elbows on the table and his rough bullet-like head, with its crop of unkempt gray hair, buried in his hands.

When Yvonne had finished her soup, and eaten all her bread, she rose, and with another timid "*Bonsoir*" slipped away to bed.

"Leave the bridle heifer tied!" shrilled madame as the child reached the courtyard.

"*Mais oui*, madame, it is done," answered Yvonne, and crept up to her box beneath the thatch.

At sixteen, Yvonne was still guarding the cows for the Bourrons. At seventeen she fell in love. He was a slick, slim youth named Pierre, with a soapy blond lock plastered under the vizor of his leather cap pulled down to his red ears. On fête days he wore in addition a scarlet necktie girdling his scrawny throat. He had watched Yvonne for a long time, very much as the snake in the fable saved the young dove until it was grown.

And so, Yvonne grew to dreaming while the cows strayed. One night the Père Bourron struck at her with a spade for her negligence, but missed. Another night he beat her soundly for letting a cow get stalled in the mud. The days on the marsh now became interminable, for Pierre worked for Gavelle, the carpenter, a good three kilomètres back of Pont du Sable, and the two could see each other only on

fête days, when he met her secretly among the dunes, or in the evenings near the farm. He would wait for her then at the edge of the woods skirting the misty sea of pasture that spread out below the farm like some vast, silent dry lake, dotted here and there with groups of sleeping cattle.

She saw Marianne but seldom now, for the latter fished mostly at the Three Wolves, sharing her catch with a crew of eight fishermen. Often they would seine the edge of the coast, their boat dancing off beyond the breakers while they netted the shallow water, swishing up the hard beach—these gamblers of the sea. They worked with skill and precision, each one having his share to do, while one—the quickest—was appointed to carry their bundle of dry clothes rolled in a tarpaulin.

Marianne seemed of casual importance to her now. We seldom think of our best friends in time of love. Yvonne longed for his kisses, which at first she did not wholly understand, but which she now grew to hunger for, just as when she was little she craved for all she wanted to eat for once—and candy.

She began to think of herself, too, of Pierre's scarlet cravat, of his new shoes too tight for him, and which he wore with the pride of a village dandy on fête days and Sundays, and of her own patched and pitifully scanty wardrobe.

"She has nothing, that little one," she had heard the gossips remark openly before her, time and time again when she was a child. Now that she was budding into womanhood and was physically twice as strong as Pierre, now that she was conscious of *herself*, she began to know the pangs of vanity.

It was about this time that she bought the ribbon, just as Marianne had foretold, a red ribbon to match Pierre's tie, and which she fashioned into a bow and kept in a paper box well hidden in the straw of her bed. The patched skirt had long ago grown too short for her, and was now stuffed in a broken window beyond the cow manger to temper the draft from the neck of a sick bull.

She wore now when it stormed thick woolen stockings and sabots; and another skirt of the Mère Bourron's fastened around a chemise of coarse homespun linen, its color faded to a delicious pale mangarine blue, and showing the strength and fullness of her body.

She had stolen down from the loft this night to meet him at the edge of the woods.

"Where is he?" were his first words as he sought her lips in the dark.

"He has gone," she whispered, when her lips were free.

"Where?"

"*Eh ben*, he went away with the Père Détour to the village—madame is asleep."

"Ah, good!" said he.

"*Mon Dieu!* But you are warm," she whispered, pressing her cheek against his own.

"I ran," he drawled. "The patron kept me late. There is plenty of work there now."

He put his arm around her and the two walked deeper into the wood, he holding her heavy moist hand idly in his own. Presently the moon came out, sailing high among the scudding clouds, flashing bright in the clear intervals. A white mist had settled low over the pasture below them, and the cattle were beginning to move restlessly under the chill blanket, changing again and again their places for the night. A bull bellowed with all his might from beyond in the mysterious distance. He had evidently scented them, for presently he emerged from the mist and moved along the edge of the woods, protected by a deep ditch. He stopped when he was abreast of them, bellowed again, and kept slowly on past them. They had seated themselves in the moonlight among the stumps of some freshly cut timber.

"*Dis donc*, what is the matter?" he asked at length, noticing her unusual silence, for she generally prattled on, telling him of the uneventful hours of her days.

"Nothing," she returned evasively.

"*Mais si. Bon Dieu!* There is something."

She placed her hands on her trembling knees.

"No, I swear there is nothing, Pierre," she said faintly.

But he insisted.

"One earns so little," she confessed, at length. "Ten sous a day, it is not much, and the days are so long on the marsh. If I knew how to cook I'd try and get a place like Emilienne."

"Bah!" said he. "You are crazy. One must study; besides, you are not yet eighteen, the Père Bourron has yet the right to you for a year."

"That is true," confessed the girl simply, "one has not much chance when one is an orphan. Listen, Pierre."

"What?"

"Listen! Is it true that thou dost love me?"

"Surely," he replied, with an easy laugh.

"Listen!" she repeated timidly. "If thou shouldst get steady work I should be content—to be—" But her voice became inaudible.

"*Allons*, what?" he demanded irritably.

"To—to be married," she whispered.

He started.

"*Eh ben!* *En voilà* an idea!" he exclaimed.

"Forgive me, Pierre, I have always had that idea," she replied softly. She dried her eyes on the back of her hand and tried hard to smile. "It is foolish, eh, the marriage costs so dear, but if thou shouldst get steady work—"

"*Eh ben!*" he answered slowly, with his Normand shrewdness. "I don't say no."

"I'll help thee, Pierre; I can work hard when I am free. One wins forty sous a day by washing and then there is the harvest."

There was a certain stubborn conviction in her words which worried him.

"*Eh ben!*" he said, at length. "We might get married—that's so."

She caught her breath.

"Swear it, Pierre, that thou wilt marry me, swear it upon Sainte Ma-

rie," she exclaimed, her breath coming quick.

"Eh, voilà, it's done. *Oui*, by Sainte Marie!"

She threw her arms about him, crushing him against her breast.

"*Dieu*, but thou art strong!" he whispered.

"Did I hurt thee?"

"No. Thou art content now?"

"Yes, I am content," she sobbed. "I am content, I am content."

He had slipped to the ground beside her. She drew his head back in her lap, her hand pressed hard against his forehead.

"*Dieu*, but I am content!" she breathed in his ear.

He felt her warm tears dropping fast upon his cheek.

All night she lay in the straw, wide awake, flushed, in a sort of fever. At daylight she drove her cows back to the marsh, having barely touched her soup.

Far across the bay glistened the roof of a new barn under construction. An object the size of a beetle was crawling over the fresh boards.

It was Pierre.

"I'm a fool," he thought, as he drove a nail. Then he fell to thinking of a girl in his own village whose father was as rich as the Père Bourron.

"*Sacré diable!*" he laughed, at length. "If every one got married who had sworn by Sainte Marie, monsieur le curé would do a good business."

A month later the Père Bourron sold out a cartful of calves at the market at Bonville. It was late at night when he closed his last bargain over a final glass, climbed up on his big two-wheeled cart, and with a face of dull crimson and a glazed eye, gathered up the reins and started swaying in his seat for home. A boy carrying milk found him at daylight the next morning lying face down in the track of his runaway cart—dead, with a fractured skull. Before another month had passed the Mère Bourron sold the farm

and went to live with her sister, a lean woman who took in sewing.

Yvonne was free.

Free to work and to be married, and she did work with silent ferocity from dawn until dark, washing the coarse linen for a farm, scrubbing the milk pans bright until often long after midnight—and saved. Pierre worked, too, but generally when he pleased, and had his hair cut on fête days, most of which he spent in the café and saw Yvonne during the odd moments when she was free.

They were married at last on practically nothing, but it was enough to pay the church and for the bride, as is the Normand custom, to provide for the linen and the bedroom furniture, and for them to pay a term's rent in advance for the room they had hired over the blacksmith's shop, down the road from Pont du Sable. The expense of the wedding they divided between them. Yvonne saw, however, that there was enough red and white wine for his friends. After the ceremony at the *mairie* the small procession passed through the village, amid the firing of shotguns and the congratulations of certain old gossips, who shook their heads a moment later over the bad match.

"She who works so hard, to have married a good-for-nothing like Pierre!" they croaked.

This opinion was universally expressed, except by Marianne, who turned savagely on the Mère Bardelle and two other old harpies; what she said being to the point and unprintable, and ending with "that it was the girl's affair and not theirs, and that she loved him—*Voilà tout!*"

Life over the blacksmith's shop went merrily for a while. Six months later—it is such an old story that it is hardly worth the telling—it was long after dark when she got back from work and found it lying on the table in their rough, clean little room—a scrap of paper beside some tiny worsted things she had been knitting for weeks.

"I am not coming back," she read, in an illiterate hand.

She would have screamed, but she could not breathe. She turned again, staring at the paper and gripping the edge of the table with both hands; then the ugly little room that smelled of singed hoofs rocked and swam before her.

When she awoke she lay on the floor. The flame of the candle was sputtering in its socket. After a while she crawled to her knees in the dark, then somehow she got to her feet and groped her way to the door, and down the narrow stairs out to the road. She felt the need of a mother and turned toward Pont du Sable, keeping to the path at the side of the wood like a homeless dog, not wishing to be observed. Every little while, she was seized with violent trembling so that she was obliged to stop—her whole body ached as if she had been beaten.

A sharp wind was whistling in from the sea and the night was so black that the roadbed was barely visible.

It was some time before she reached the beginning of Pont du Sable, and turned down a forgotten path that ran back of the village by the marsh. A light gleamed ahead—the lantern of a fishing boat moored far out on the slimy mud. She pushed on toward it, mistaking its position in her agony for the hut of Marianne. Before she knew it, she was well out on the treacherous mud, slipping and sinking. She had no longer the strength now to pull her tired feet out of the mud. Twice she sank in the slime above her knees. She tried to go back, but the mud had become ooze—she was sinking—she screamed, screamed—she was gone and she knew it. Then she slipped and fell on her face in a glaze of water from the incoming tide. At this instant some one shouted back, but she did not hear.

It was Marianne.

It was she who had moored the boat with the lantern and was on her way back to her hut when she heard a woman scream twice. She stopped as suddenly as if she had been shot at, straining her eyes in the direction the

sound came from. She knew there was no worse spot in the bay, a semi-floating solution of mud veined with quicksand. She knew, too, how far the incoming tide had reached, for she had just left it at her bare heels by way of a winding narrow causeway with a hard shell bottom that led to the marsh. She did not call for help, for she knew what lay before her and there was not a second to lose. The next instant, she had sprung out on the treacherous mud, running for a life in the fast-deepening glaze of water.

"Lie down!" she shouted.

Then her feet touched a solid spot caked with shell and grass. Here she halted for an instant to listen—a choking groan caught her ear.

"Lie down!" she shouted again and sprang forward. She knew the knack of running on that treacherous slime.

She leaped to a patch of shell and listened again. The woman was choking not ten yards ahead of her, almost within reach of a thin point of matted grass running back to the marsh, and there she found her, and she was still breathing. With her great strength she slid her to the point of grass—it held them both. Then she lifted her bodily in her arms, swung her on her back, and ran splashing knee-deep in water to solid ground.

"*Sacré bon Dieu!*" she sobbed, as she staggered on with her burden. "*C'est ma belle petite!*"

For weeks Yvonne lay in the hut of the worst vagabond of Pont du Sable—so did a mite of humanity with black eyes, who cried and laughed when he pleased. And Marianne fished for them both, alone and single-handed, wrenching time and time again comforts from the sea, for she would allow no one to go near them, not even such old friends as monsieur le curé and myself—that old hag with her clear blue eyes, who walks with the stride of a man, and who looks at you squarely, at times disdainfully—even when drunk.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS

B A FIRST NIGHTER

Some notable London successes that New York will see. Yellow journalism attacked in "The Earth" which passes from realism to romance. Gallant naval heroes in "The Flag Lieutenant" a modern variant of Damon and Pythias. "Penelope," witty and amusing, the latest of the Maugham series of social comedies. "The Fires of Fate" a modern morality in melodramatic form



VERY American theatrical person I met in London during the summer told me how bad the English season had been, how few plays of any consequence had been produced, and how little business most of them were doing. And while I believe I have as much faith in mankind as most people, I have, also, that unfortunate habit of wanting to see things for myself, before I am entirely convinced. Moreover, through a somewhat prolonged experience, I have discovered that, from force of habit, a great many people in this world have a way of making up their minds that a thing is so, and then sticking to their belief, no matter how much testimony there may be to the contrary. It is a sort of unconscious prevarication, which, while morally less culpable, perhaps, than another form of lying, has just about as bad an effect.

It is an extraordinary season in either London or New York that has a dozen great successes to its credit—half a dozen is a high average—and yet I can easily jot down offhand at

least eight entertainments that have been conspicuous magnets for the British playgoers. "The Earth," "The Flag Lieutenant," "Penelope," "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," and "The Fires of Fate," among the more pretentious forms of playwriting; "Henry of Navarre" and "The Prisoner of the Bastile" of the floridly melodramatic type; and "The Arcadians," "Our Miss Gibbs," and "The Persian Princess" among the musical comedies, have all enjoyed long and profitable runs.

There is scarcely one of these that New York will not see during the early part of the present season, which would appear to indicate that some of our American theatrical people did not consider the season in London so hopeless as the majority would have made it appear.

An English theatrical person to whom I was talking one day, and who had just had some trouble with one of our vaudeville artists over terms, expressed the opinion that American theatrical people want the earth. Whether he was right or not I do not pretend to know, but I do know that Henry B. Harris got it. In this case, however, "The Earth" referred to comes done

up in a manuscript roll, in the form of a play by James Fagan, who is practically an unknown quantity on our side of the Atlantic, though he has recently been numbered among the more successful of the newer English playwrights. Miss Lena Ashwell, who came to New York a season or two ago to play "The Shulamite," and who was, also, seen alternating with our own Margaret Anglin in the leading rôles of "Mrs. Dane's Defense," has the credit of a discoverer. She discovered "The Earth," and produced it at the Kingsway Theatre, under her own management, where it prospered for a long time. "The Earth," though it fails to be quite convincing at the very last, and deals with fiction rather than with fact, is an interesting, well-knit play, and one which should appeal, I think, no less to American than to English audiences.

It purports to lay bare some abuses of the British yellow press, which is regarded with considerable suspicion by the better class of Englishmen, though the masses enjoy the sensationalism which it serves up hot in extra special editions as often as the law, and often er than the actual news, allows. The hero of the play is a young cabinet minister, the *Right Honorable Denzil Trevena, M. P.*, who comes into conflict with the power that rules the press when he seeks to introduce a bill into parliament, designed to help the working man through its effect on the current wage. *Sir Felix Janion* is the owner not only of *The Earth*, an influential yellow newspaper, but of several other journals with circulations running into the millions, and he is not only opposed to the bill in question himself, but is determined to make it *non grata* to the general public as well, the power that he wields through extensive publicity being such that he can "make people want what he wants under the impression that it is what they have been wanting all the time." When the cabinet minister, by invitation, comes to the newspaper man's home, he is sharply advised to withdraw his bill, *Sir Felix* insisting that it cannot pass, and that a refusal to withdraw

it will mean the young man's political suicide.

Decidedly the best-written scene in the play is that in which these two men have a wordy battle over their respective positions, with *Trevena* arguing along altruistic and socialistic lines, while the other man meets him fairly and squarely from the viewpoint of a successful and far-thinking business man. The young cabinet minister stands firm, however, and it is now apparent that *Sir Felix* must find some means of forcing him to accede. For *Sir Felix* is not only opposed to the bill on principle, but feels that further consideration of it in parliament will be the means of discrediting his newspapers, as he has already announced in *The Earth* that the bill will positively be withdrawn.

You have previously learned that *Trevena* is passionately devoted to a certain lovely young countess, whose husband is a drunkard and a blackguard, and the newspaper proprietor, by means of paid spies, learns of the relations of the pair. Then he summons *Trevena* to his office and threatens, unless he withdraws the bill, to go to the lady's husband with his story. There would be nothing for the husband to do under the circumstances but to bring suit for a divorce, which would not only mean a nasty scandal for the woman to face, but would certainly mean the ruin of the young cabinet minister's future career. In the face of this overwhelming disclosure *Trevena* finally agrees to withdraw the bill.

The countess is astonished to learn that her hero has knuckled under and comes to the newspaper man's office to plead with him for mercy. When he refuses to grant a favor she changes it to a demand, asserting, if he still persists in his intention, that she will go to the press association, tell all the circumstances, and thereby show them just what sort of a mean, scheming creature this powerful journalist is. That is too much for *Sir Felix* and he admits himself beaten. Then the curtain falls.

The conclusion is rather lame, but

after all "The Earth," particularly as it is acted at the Kingsway, by Mr. Norman McKinnell, as the newspaper man; Mr. Allan Ainsworth, as the *Right Honorable Trevena*, and Miss Ashwell, as the unfortunate countess, has provided a splendid evening's entertainment, and that is enough to satisfy the average playgoer, whether he is of English or American extraction. In New York, I am told, Mr. Edmund Breese is to appear in the rôle of the man who owns *The Earth*, and the other principal rôles should not be so very difficult to fill.

Whether the heroics of one or two members of his majesty's navy will make a strong appeal to New York audiences I do not know, but the success of "The Second in Command," which John Drew acted at the Empire several years ago, would seem to argue that our audiences can enthuse over a noble and generous heart, whether it beats under a British or an American military or naval jacket. If this is so they should enjoy "The Flag Lieutenant," in which I believe that very agreeable actor, Bruce McRae, is to appear in New York, and in which Mr. Cyril Maude, one of London's most charming comedians, had a most successful run at The Playhouse.

Naturally, a play of this kind offers many opportunities in the way of thrills, and its authors, Major W. P. Drury and Leo Trevor, have also been successful in introducing an appealing little sentimental story, and in lightening it with some very agreeable bits of humor. The two characters to stir the imagination are *Richard Lascelles*, the flag lieutenant, an easy-going, amiable, attractive sort of person, who is in love with the beautiful *Lady Hermione Wynne*, and *William Thesiger*, his friend and comrade in arms, who is no less brave and deserving than the flag lieutenant, but who has never had much luck. Years before, *Lascelles* had got into an unpleasant mess about some money, which would have been the means of disgracing him but for the timely assistance of *Thesiger*, and since that time the two had been bosom

friends. In the meantime *Lascelles* has seen active service, fallen into a small fortune, and is now to marry the lady of his heart, while *Thesiger* is still living on his pay, and eating his heart out at getting no chance of distinction.

Then, trouble in Crete has necessitated the sending of the officers and men of the *Royal Edward* to an isolated camp where, ultimately, the only hope of rescue lies in their ability to communicate with the squadron. It is *Thesiger* who conceives the idea of dressing himself as a native and carrying a message through the enemy's line to the telegraph office, but a stray shot, just as he is starting, has laid him in the dust, stunning, but not killing him, yet incapacitating him for his mission. Thereupon, *Lascelles* carries out his plan successfully. On his return he finds that *Thesiger* has recovered, but the shot has destroyed his memory. Whereupon, remembering his pal's generosity in the years gone by, the flag lieutenant hits upon the notion of saying that *Thesiger* was the hero of the occasion, and the story passes muster.

The result is that *Thesiger* is promoted, feted, and made a hero in the newspapers. But, in the meantime, a story has gone round that *Lascelles* was absent from his post at a critical moment, and that he had shown the white feather. I need hardly add that in time the young man's name is cleared, and in such a way that neither his friend nor the war office knows of the circumstances by which promotion has gone to a man, who, though he richly deserves it, has not exactly earned it.

To American readers a synopsis of the first act of "The Fires of Fate," in which Lewis Waller has had a success, and which Charles Frohman has bought for America, will at once suggest "The Dawn of a To-morrow," in which Eleanor Robson appeared last season. But the two plays are not nearly so much alike as might be supposed from the earlier incidents of the action. Sir Conan Doyle calls "The Fires of Fate"

a modern morality play, and, of course, an author has a right to his opinion, but the piece will appeal more on account of its exciting melodramatic qualities than by any reason of its value as a lesson in conduct or of ethics.

The first act is occupied mainly with a discussion of the question of suicide. Is a man entitled to take his own life under certain conditions? *James Rodden*, a physician, his patient, *Colonel Egerton*, upon whom he has just passed the death sentence, and the doctor's brother, a clergyman, argue the question at some length, and there can be no doubt that the weight of the proof is with the man of the cloth, who, of course, argues against self-destruction. So the colonel abandons the idea of suicide, and the three men decide to go to Egypt together for a holiday.

The second act finds them on a tourists' steamer on the Nile, and the dying man has fallen in love with *Sallie Adams*, an American girl, who, unknown to the colonel, reciprocates the tender feeling. The "big scene" comes in the third act when the tourists are attacked by dervishes, the women carried off, and the colonel left for dying on the Abousir rock. He has been stunned by a blow on the head, but recovers consciousness in time to signal for relief with his handkerchief. And the terrible blow, it appears, has done him so much good that the same doctor, who had pronounced his case hopeless in the first act, now declares in the fourth that he is miraculously recovered. So he is free to marry *Sallie Adams* whenever he likes, which ceremony is presumably performed as soon as the curtain falls.

"Penelope," in which that scintillating little comedienne, Miss Marie Tempest, again captivated London, is delightful fun. I do not know of any actress in New York who could approach Miss Tempest in the piece, and I sincerely hope that Mr. Charles Frohman will see his way clear to giving us the star with the play when it is done here. "Penelope" is by William Somerset Maugham, who has been writing

most of the successful society comedies that London has seen for the last two seasons. We have thus far had only two of his plays, "Lady Frederick" and "Jack Straw." "Penelope" is one of his best. And like the others it is a success, not so much on account of its story as the manner of the telling. It is, in fact, an old story retold—that of the woman whose husband has strayed from the path of strict propriety, and who determines to win him back, through an apparent ignorance of his folly, and an encouragement of the very conditions which will serve to bring him most often into the society of "the other woman."

Penelope is all for divorce when she first learns that her husband has been "carrying on," but her wise old father counsels patience, and ultimately *Penelope's* mother comes to take the same view of it. The delightfully surprising situation in the piece is one in which *Penelope* reveals to her husband that she has known of his peccadilloes all the time, and that she has encouraged him in them at the suggestion of her father and mother.

At this point, the husband, instead of being penitent, as he should be under the circumstances, insists upon the superiority of his own morals, and accuses his relations by marriage, wife included, of being entirely lacking in a moral sense. If not exactly immoral, he insists—like the Westerner in "The Easiest Way"—that they are "unmoral." But he ends by getting heartily sick of the lady with whom he has been gallivanting, and is only too glad to make peace at any price.

As a matter of fact, he has found his experiment in double living extremely expensive. A doctor by profession, he has excused his frequent absences from home on the plea of a very sick patient, whereupon *Penelope*, cleverly playing upon his deceit, has allowed herself various and expensive frocks and hats, arguing quite glibly that with such a growing and profitable practice, he was surely in a position to allow her a few additional luxuries.



Ainslee's, present and future. A very notable book is "The Inner Shrine." "The Romance of a Plain Man," by Ellen Glasgow, is told with considerable skill. "The Winning Chance," by Elizabeth Dejeans, rests upon a false basis. Lucia Chamberlain proves in "The Other Side of the Door" that she knows how to tell a story acceptably. Eden Phillpotts at his very best in "The Three Brothers." John Reed Scott makes a new departure in "The Woman in Question." A melodramatic tale of adventure is Richard Harding Davis' "The White Mice."



R. McCUTCHEON'S new Graustark story, "Truxton King," is fairly under way with the second installment in this number of AINSLEE's, and readers of the magazine will have a chance now to judge for themselves whether or not this is going to interest them as much as we have believed it would.

The story is unquestionably a big magazine feature; its serial publication is an event—neither of its predecessors appeared serially—it is the product of Mr. McCutcheon's latest, and, presumably, his highest art; and the publishers of AINSLEE's feel that they are repaid for its high cost in the benefits conferred upon their readers. As the tale progresses and the interest deepens all these things will become increasingly manifest.

The short stories in this number are all good, but one or two are worthy of special notice for their striking originality. "Lourdes," by Herman Whitaker, and "The Lion Tamer," by Campbell MacCulloch, are of the type called strong stories, and no one can read them without being deeply interested and impressed.

The October number will, of course, be featured by the continuation of

"Truxton King" and a colored frontispiece by Harrison Fisher. Mr. Fisher's pictures, by the way, have been a cause of great gratification to the publishers because of the unstinted praise that has been bestowed upon them. A great many readers have taken pains to give expression to the pleasure they have derived from the originality of Mr. Fisher's designs.

The complete novel will be a story called "The Whirlpool," by Molly Elliot Seawell, who has fairly earned her position as one of the most popular writers of fiction of the day, evidenced by a long list of successful books, including "The Château of Montplaisir," "The Secret of Tori," and "Maid Marian." "The Whirlpool" is a story of international marriage, not the familiar one.

Among the short stories will be another of the adventures of Sylvia Sligh. J. W. Marshall will have a humorous story in "The Meddlers" which will force a laugh from the most saturnine disposition imaginable. Jane W. Guthrie will have one of her imitable bridge stories.

An exceptional variety of fiction will make up the October table of contents, the contributors being, in addition to those mentioned above, Charles Neville Buck, Quentin M. Drake, Wolcott Beard, Steel Williams, Julian Con-

over, Campbell MacCulloch, and Caroline Duer.

Of course, the bridge articles will be continued—they have become an AINSLEE's institution—and William Armstrong will continue his musical articles.



It is admitted now, we believe, that Mr. Basil King is the author of "The Inner Shrine," published by Harper and Brothers. There seems to have been no reason for all the mystery of authorship that can be justified on legitimate grounds; if, as seems probable, the book's anonymity has been exploited to increase its sales the fact is not especially creditable to the good taste of those concerned.

The merits of the story are so great that it seems a pity that they could not have been relied upon to sell it. If Mr. King is really the author he is to be most heartily congratulated upon a book that, in our judgment, surpasses the art of both Mrs. Wharton and Mrs. Humphry Ward.

The story is told with understanding, with sympathy, and with a literary self-control that seems to be growing rarer. The plot is not especially notable, the book is developed by characterization rather than by events or incidents, and its movement consists in the gradual unfolding of the strong points in Diane Eveleth. The author has been criticised for inconsistency in Diane, but this criticism seems futile when one recalls her mixed French and Irish ancestry. That she should change from a Parisian social butterfly to a woman with serious ideas of domesticity is not so strange, after all. Her experiences after the death of her husband, the manner of his death, and the loss of fortune, the traducing of her character by Bienville and its consequences, and her treatment by the worldly society people of New York, were all sufficiently sobering influences.

Most of the other characters, especially Bienville and Dorothea Pruyn, are equally well done. Derek Pruyn, on the other hand, is not quite so con-

vincing. It may be that the author considered that the exigencies of the story required that Pruyn should act as he did, but it hardly seems natural that a man of his type should have been so easily impressed by Bienville. And, besides, his training as a lawyer should have made him rather more cautious.



Miss Ellen Glasgow's new book, "The Romance of a Plain Man," published by the Macmillan Company, has for its theme the class distinctions existing in the South.

Americans have been accustomed to pride themselves on a total absence of social distinctions; we have insisted upon the constitutional declaration that all men are created free and equal, and yet it is largely a matter of habit—which, however, has lately shown some signs of weakening—for the fact is that the idea of caste does exist and in other regions besides the South.

The story is told in the first person by a man belonging to the class of "poor whites" of Virginia. The first stimulus to his ambition seems to have been applied by an aristocratic little girl who called him "a common boy." As a consequence of that epithet he went to work, and by the time other boys were graduating from college he had achieved an education, had become established in business, and was well on the road to wealth and financial power in the State.

Unfortunately for him and for the little girl, now a beautiful woman, they fall in love with each other and marry in defiance of tradition. It is unfortunate because their ideas of life are radically different. The husband, chafing under the sense of his social unworthiness, slaves to accumulate more wealth, believing that only in that way can he hold his wife. While she, careless of all these things, wants only his love and companionship. So his absorption in business brings to her nothing but the disappointment which he has so dreaded.

The story is told with more skill than

Miss Glasgow has shown before. She allows it to grow naturally, she makes the reader feel that each step of progress in the narrative is inevitable, but she has left the climax a little in doubt, so that one is not entirely sure that the readjustment between husband and wife is a vital reunion or only a matter of externals.



An utterly false notion of a certain phase of American life is conveyed by Elizabeth Dejeans in her novel, "The Winning Chance," published by J. B. Lippincott Company. If the author had been content to tell Janet Carew's story and let it stand by itself, no criticism could be made of it on the ground of its truthfulness, but both the author and the publishers, in referring to it as picturing "as never before the big problem of the American girl who enters upon a business career," encourage inferences which reflect upon business men and women alike.

The false basis upon which the story rests infects everything about it. It is not true that girls in business are, as a rule, subjected to the sort of thing that was forced upon Janet by Leo Varek. It is not true that Varek is representative of the American business man, or that the Vareks in real life are numerous enough to constitute a class. There doubtless are individual cases, like Janet's, of girls who are forced against their wills to such a surrender as hers, but to speak of these isolated instances as typifying a "big problem" to be faced by all girls is monstrous.

Such merits as the book would otherwise have are wholly nullified by the unwarranted presumptions as to the conditions which it undertakes to describe. One can feel little sympathy with a character who is represented as suffering from conditions that have no foundation in fact, who is made to pose as a martyr to circumstances that do not exist. The lack of sincerity in the description of Janet's surroundings in Varek's employ leaves the reader lukewarm.

The story is fairly well constructed and developed, the characterization is good, and, if it were not for the defects referred to, would be interesting reading.



"The Other Side of the Door," by Lucia Chamberlain, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, is another of Miss Chamberlain's stories of San Francisco.

It involves a murder mystery, somewhat different, however, from the conventional detective story. It is, indeed, a love story, and not a detective story at all.

Miss Ellie Fenwick tells it in the first person, and she begins by setting forth the bad reputation of Mr. John Montgomery, though she succeeds in giving the impression that in spite of his wildness he is not really as bad as he is painted. On her way from the market one morning with some mushrooms which she has purchased for her father's breakfast she is so unfortunate, in passing a notorious gambling house, as to be a witness of the murder, as she supposes, of the proprietor by young Mr. Montgomery. The body of the murdered man is thrown into the street from the door, followed immediately by Montgomery, who disappears as speedily as possible. In her fright the girl hurries home and tells the story to her father and his friend, the district attorney, who is breakfasting with him.

This leads to Montgomery's arrest and trial, with Ellie as a witness against him.

It would not be fair to tell how the mystery is unraveled, or how the Spanish woman was involved in it. A hint of the dénouement, however, may be given by the statement that Ellie and Johnny Montgomery fall in love with each other, and that the ending is a happy one.

Miss Chamberlain knows how to tell a story acceptably, and always displays sufficient reserve to save the tale from undue sensationalism.

"The Three Brothers," by Eden Phillpotts, published by the Macmillan Company, is another of the author's well-known Dartmoor stories, and for several reasons it is, in our judgment, probably the best that Mr. Phillpotts has ever done.

It is, of course, unnecessary to say that he shows the most comprehensive knowledge of the locality, the people, and the customs of which he writes. No author that we can now recall is so completely master of the subject-matter of his tales as he is of this moorland region of Devonshire. This he has already demonstrated.

"The Three Brothers" shows artistic growth. There is an improvement in construction, less reliance is placed upon character delineation—something which Mr. Phillpotts has hitherto shown a tendency to overdo—the tale is more compact and cohesive than its predecessors, in spite of an obvious temptation to discursiveness.

But, best of all, Mr. Phillpotts has given us a story of Dartmoor without that suggestion of animalism, almost bestiality—though that is much too strong a term—in his characters, that gruesomeness in human relationships, which possibly the facts forced upon him, which has marked his previous stories.

He has developed a very wholesome tale to a most attractive climax in the disclosure at the end of the real springs of the character of the old man Humphrey, who has always been misunderstood, and feared, and even hated by his neighbors.

There are several love stories and other complications which go to make up the plot, but they all hang upon the working out of the inevitable development of Humphrey's life to the point where the carol singers, taking him unawares, force from him the fundamental sweetness of his nature.



John Reed Scott has undertaken to write a modern romance this time in "The Woman in Question," published

by the J. B. Lippincott Company, but the author of "The Red Huzzar" has not been able to escape entirely from the mediæval atmosphere of his previous stories.

The scene of the new story is western Pennsylvania, obviously in and around Gettysburg and Pittsburg, and besides the hero there are two fascinating widows—one of whom, however, still has a husband, as it later appears, much to her disgust.

The inopportune appearance of this undesirable citizen helps to make the story; indeed, there would be no story otherwise. Some time prior to the beginning of the tale the hero, one of the criminal rich, had, while killing time on the Grand Canal, in Venice, heard a woman's laugh and had caught a glimpse of her in a gondola. He remembered the laugh and the fact that the woman's hair was black. At his first meeting with the widow in the story he recognized her laugh, but unfortunately found that her hair was red, and the real thing, too. This change of color deceived even her own husband when he turns up.

The fact that she has a husband living, when she supposed him dead, comes to the lady too late, for she has already fallen in love with the gallant young hero. But it is not a difficult thing to dispose of an inconvenient husband in a novel, and Mr. Scott does it without scruple.

The author has shown in this tale that he is able to use modern society dialogue effectively, and that he can give convincing descriptions of the pastimes of the leisure class.



"The White Mice," by Richard Harding Davis, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is a frankly melodramatic tale of adventure.

Its hero, Mr. Rodman Forrester, a youthful college graduate—Yale, of course—is one of the modern knight-errants who never do anything useful until his interest is enlisted in one of the impossible and fantastic schemes

that are hatched only between the covers of a "best seller." As a rule, the young Don Quixote acquires, in the pursuit of the scheme, the education for the serious work of life that he seems always to have missed in college.

Roddy's father, a hard-headed contractor, has sent his son to Japan to secure certain lighthouse contracts, but all he seems to have done there is to participate in the organization of the Order of the White Mice, the object of which "is to save everybody's life."

After his failure with the wily Orientals, Roddy is shipped to Venezuela by his father as an inspector of the construction of a breakwater for which the Forrester Construction Company has the contract. Here he learns of the imprisonment of one General Don Miguel Rojas for revolutionary designs upon the government. He is joined by Peter de Peyster, one of his associate White Mice, and together they concoct a plan to liberate the general, sacrificing, of course, his father's business.

How he carried out this enterprise is the substance of the story. There are plenty of complications—including the beautiful Señorita Inez Rojas—encounters with fiery Venezuelans in the government interests; but it is needless to say that the inexperienced Yale man defeats all the general's enemies, among whom are numbered his father's political agents.

It is rather cheap melodrama, but told in Mr. Davis' facile style it is not uninteresting for a summer book. Roddy's cheerful irresponsibility and his flippant interviews with his father supply what is needed in the way of humor.



The appetite for detective stories will be satisfied to some extent, doubtless,

by a book published by the John C. Winston Company, entitled "Adventures of the World's Greatest Detectives."

The book contains fifteen narratives, none of them fiction, of criminal investigations of American, French, English, and Russian detectives, by means of which murderers, safe robbers, and counterfeiters are brought to justice.

The compiler of the book, George Barton, has made his selection of the tales without reference to time, and has included adventures of Vidocq in the early part of the nineteenth century, as well as of Chief Wilkie, of the U. S. Secret Service, of the present time. To any one who likes detective stories, and does not demand a feminine interest, this book will be welcome.



Important New Books.

"The Patience of John Morland," Mary Dillon, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The Infamous John Friend," Mrs. R. S. Garnett, Henry Holt & Co.

"Jason," Justus Miles Forman, Harper & Bros.

"The Florentine Frame," Elizabeth Robins, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Toll of the Sea," Roy Norton, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Long Gallery," Eva Lathbury, Henry Holt & Co.

"The Shadow of the Crescent," Edward B. Mitchell, Frederick A. Stokes Co.

"The Gun Runner," Arthur Stringer, B. W. Dodge & Co.

"The Half Moon," Ford Madox Hueffer, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The Widow," Helen Rowland, Dodge Publishing Co.

"What is Physical Life," William Hanna Thompson, M. D., Dodd, Mead & Co.

"King Alfred's Jewel," Mrs. Spencer Trask, John Lane Co.

"A False Position," Mrs. Baillie Reynolds, Brentano's.

"Antonio," Ernest Oldmeadow, Century Co.

"The Fascinating Mrs. Holton," E. F. Benson, Doubleday, Page & Co.





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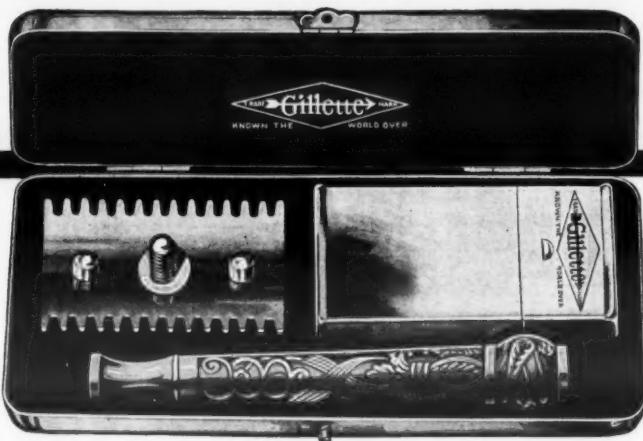
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J. ULLRICH & CO.

Manufacturers

603 Thames Bldg., 135 Greenwich St., New York

KILL THE HAIR ROOT

If you don't the hair will grow again. My method is the one used by all reputed dermatologists. The Mahler Appliance kills the hair root by a steady, constant and continued electricity. No shock, no sears, no danger or risk of any kind. No knowledge of electricity required to operate. Send to-day for book which fully describes Mahler Appliance and contains evidences of results achieved by those who have used it. This book is FREE. Write NOW.

D. J. MAHLER, 299 M Mahler Park, E. Providence, R. I.

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

20% DOWN—10% PER MONTH

Why wait for your Diamond until you have saved the price? Pay for it by the Lyon Method. Lyon's Diamonds are guaranteed perfect blue-white. A written guarantee accompanies each Diamond. All goods sent prepaid for inspection. **10% discount for cash.** Send now for catalogue No. 17

J. M. LYON & CO. Established 1843 71-73 Nassau St., New York

2317 \$25	2132 \$.60	2189 \$.50
2315 \$.35		2113 \$.50
2318 \$.30	2110 \$.35	2162 \$.50
2306		2380 \$.25
	2198 \$.25	

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

*This is the Oldest
"Doggone" Advertising
Idea in the World.*



The reason this illustration is used is because it is a real photograph of a real Bull Dog and a real Rubberset Shaving Brush. It shows that the bristles of a Rubberset Shaving Brush can not even be pulled or twisted out of the setting, while those of an ordinary brush just fall out when the rosin, cement or glue setting is softened by hot water. The bristles of a

RUBBERSET *Shaving
Brush*

TRADE MARK

are held in a solid bed of hard, vulcanized rubber—water-proof, soap-proof, alkali-proof, wear-proof. You can boil a Rubberset if you like—it does it good. Rubberset Brushes are patented and are the only brushes held in hard rubber. The name on every brush guarantees it.

At all dealers' and barbers', all styles and sizes, 25, 50, 75 cents to \$6.00.

To the average man we commend the \$1.00 brush.

RUBBERSET COMPANY,

SALES DEPT. NO. 30
HUDSON TERMINAL, 50 CHURCH ST., NEW YORK CITY. 68 FERRY ST., NEWARK, N. J.
BRANCH OFFICES—BOSTON, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO, MONTREAL.
LONDON BRANCH: 2 STONECUTTER ST., LONDON, E. C., ENGLAND.



BERSEY
TRADE MARK
**Shaving Cream
Soap**

Composed of Glycerine and Cocoanut Oil—well known skin healers. Lathers freely. Softens the beard perfectly. Contains no free alkali to smart and dry the skin. The face feels smooth and soft after shaving. Sanitary and convenient. 25c a tube. Send dealer's name and 4c in stamps for 10c sample tube.

RUBBERSET COMPANY.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

9—1—3

A GREAT COMBINATION

Of Stories in THE POPULAR for September

LOOK FOR IT

NINE SHORT STORIES:

THE RING-TAILED TIGER
A VERY COMMONPLACE HERO
MRS. SWEENEY'S TACT
A TOUCH OF KING LEAR
MAN-WITH-THE-BURNED-FACE
HALF THE NINE OF HEARTS
THE TIGER'S-EYE
SKIN DEEP
THE SERVICE OF THE SWORD

Western	B. M. Bower
College	Ralph D. Paine
Humorous	Charles R. Barnes
Detective	Lester Griswold
Western	Bertrand W. Sinclair
Adventure	R. F. Foster
Detective	Ross Beeckman
Western	Burke Jenkins
Adventure	George Bronson-Howard

ONE COMPLETE NOVEL:

A GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER, FRANCIS LYNDE

THREE SERIAL STORIES:

UNDERGROUND DIPLOMACY, *Camorra*
THE NEW MOONSTONE *Mystery*
BILL BRUCE OF HARVARD, *Baseball*

J. Kenilworth Egerton
W. B. M. Ferguson
Burt L. Standish

THIRTEEN IN ALL

Popular for September

On Sale Everywhere August 10th.

Price Fifteen Cents



Turn Depressing Nerve Exhaustion Into Active, Healthy Vim

Are you easily excited—high strung? Do morbid, unpleasant thoughts bother you—are they sapping your mind of the force and vim so essential to life's success? The trouble is—your NERVES. Your vital forces are being wasted. This marvelous telephone system of your body has gotten beyond control. Precautionary steps must be taken at once or you will be rendered unfit for the serious duties of life. At this dangerous period you will find

Pabst Extract *The Best Tonic*

because it combines the quieting and tonic effects of the choicest HOPS with the nutritive and digestive elements of rich barley MALT. The HOPS have a soothing effect upon the nerves, inducing mental peace and refreshing rest. The pure extract of barley MALT is rich in nourishment. Being in predigested form, it is easily assimilated and the impaired nerve forces are quickly strengthened.

Physicians of repute everywhere are constantly vouching for the merits of Pabst Extract, The "Best" Tonic, by recommending it to strengthen the weak and build up the overworked; to relieve insomnia and conquer dyspepsia; to help the anaemic and aid the nervous; to assist nursing mothers and invigorate old age.
Order a Dozen from Your Local Druggist Today—Insist Upon It Being Pabst
A Library Slip, good for Books and Magazines, is packed with each bottle.
Booklet and Picture "Baby's First Adventure" sent free on request.

PABST EXTRACT CO.

DEPT. 29

MILWAUKEE, WIS.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

An Advertiser Should Never Tie Himself Up

We say to you all—to our clients and others—it is wrong to be blindly contented.

It is wrong to tie yourself up—to bind yourself by a time contract with any advertising agent.

It is wrong because it kills incentive. It lessens endeavor.

The advertiser who gets the utmost attention is the man who is never caught.

Our rule henceforth is—no contracts with clients.

We seek advertising on the plea that we make it pay better than others. And we expect to keep it only so long as we do that.

If any agency can make any campaign pay better than we, that advertising belongs elsewhere.

By the same rule, if we can make your advertising pay better than others, your account belongs to us.

But how can you know?

That is what we want to tell you. To start with, the probabilities are nearly all on our side.

We have far outgrown all rival agencies, solely through results brought to clients.

We handle hundreds of accounts which are bound to us solely by the fact that we outsell all others.

We pay our Copy Chief \$1,000 per week, because no other man has yet proved the power to sell so many goods.

Each of our able men has won his place here by outselling other men.

Each man, to hold his place, is constantly compelled to get better results than can any outsider.

These men work together—work in Advisory Boards—so that every campaign gets some help from them all.

All these facts indicate that, in all probability, we can get the best results.

But there are ways to show, in your particular case, our results as compared with others.

It can be done without any commitment on your part—without disturbing your present relations.

It can be done in a way which will settle the matter beyond any possible question.

The result may be—and will probably be—to multiply the results of your advertising.

It may show you how to get, for the same commission, immeasurably better agency service than you are getting now.

The proof may be worth thousands of dollars to you. It has been worth millions to some.

If you think that worth while, please write us a letter simply saying, "State the way."

LORD & THOMAS
Newspaper, Magazine and Outdoor
ADVERTISING

Second National Bank Building
Fifth Ave. and Twenty-eighth St., New York
Trude Bldg., 67 Wabash Ave., Chicago

Address either office. They are equally equipped.

Cailler's SWISS MILK CHOCOLATE

Cailler's comes to you all the way from Switzerland

It is a genuine Swiss Milk Chocolate made of the world-famous cream-laden milk of the Swiss cattle in the fertile mountain valleys of Switzerland. It is so rich, smooth and creamy, so full of nutrition, that it melts on the tongue.

Don't be deceived by imitation Swiss chocolate—always look for the actual words "Swiss Milk Chocolate" on the package. Another way to avoid imitation Swiss Chocolate is to learn the exquisite "Cailler taste."

J. H. FREYMAN, Agent for U. S. A.

Cailler's is the most wholesome of foods as well as the most delicious of confections. The more children eat of it, the more it nourishes them. Sold everywhere in 5c, 10c, 15c and 30c cakes and up.

FREE Send name and address for a generous sample cake. Also save 100 tissue-paper wrappers and get a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. cake of Cailler's free.

60-B University Place, New York

BLUE LABEL KETCHUP

Delicious—Appetizing—Satisfying

The kind with the natural flavor of the tomato—keeps after it is opened.

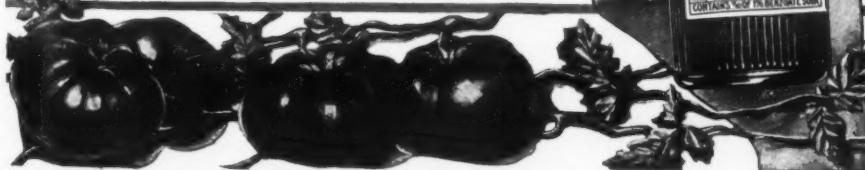
Contains only those ingredients

Recognized and Endorsed by the U. S. Government

Insist on products bearing our name, not only ketchup, but soups, canned fruits, vegetables and meats, jams, jellies, preserves, etc.

Write today for our free booklet "Original Menus," telling what to have for breakfast, luncheon, dinner.

CURTICE BROTHERS CO., Rochester, N. Y.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

How \$15 Grew to \$15,000

HERE is a short story of the splendid commercial growth and success of a company that has risen from a small beginning to leadership in a business in which the profits are unusually large.

¶ The Racine Boat Manufacturing Company is one of the foremost boat building companies in America. Its big plant at Muskegon, Mich. (moved some time ago from Racine, Wis.) has a capacity of 4,000 boats and vessels a year. Its name is known and its boats are sailing on all the waters of the world. Many prominent men are owners of Racine yachts.

¶ The president of this company started in business with an investment of \$1,500. He is now the head of a corporation with a capital of \$1,500,000.

¶ Its foremost customer is the United States Government, for which the Racine Company has built and is building vessels. In this department of its business alone, there is now the special opportunity of an important increase.

Ains.
9-9

W. J. Reynolds,
Racine Boat Mfg. Co.,
1328 Broadway, N. Y.

Please send me booklet, "Racine Profit-Sharing Plan," without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

¶ The company has been working night and day and has not been able to turn out more than 50 per cent. of the business that has been offered.

¶ As a part of its plan for handling its present business and for a large increase in its capacity, the Racine Company has announced an offer by which you may share on an unusual basis in the greater profits which the company will make.

¶ The investment gives absolute safety. It is backed by ample assets of great value. The company is a large, established and thriving enterprise. And in addition to the high guaranteed income paid at once, this opportunity is extraordinary because of the profit-sharing arrangement by which you may share in all the profits of the company—its important Government work—and its other profitable and increasing business.

¶ This exceptional opportunity for money makers is clearly described in a booklet, "The Racine Profit-Sharing Plan."

¶ If you have \$50, \$100 or \$1,000 which you would invest where it will be absolutely safe, providing a large income immediately, with the opportunity for still greater profits, you should cut off the corner coupon and mail it at once. You will find the booklet intensely interesting. But you must send for it immediately.

COLGATE'S RIBBON DENTAL CREAM



An Amusing Incident *(Told by a Dentist)*

"COLGATE & CO.

Dear Sirs: Thank you for calling my attention to your Dental Cream. Preventative dentistry for children is my special work, and I am delighted to know of such a delicious dentifrice for young people. One little boy ate the contents of the tube which I asked his mother to get for him, remarking to me the next day:

"Say, Doctor, I wish that tube had been three feet long."

Just Like a boy!

There is actually in a large tube of Colgate's Cream

15 feet of Cream.

If used properly (1 inch twice daily) it will last 3 months.

42 in. of Cream in trial tube sent for 4 cts. in stamps
COLGATE & CO., (Est. 1806) Dept. A, 55 John St., N. Y.

Signed by a former President of a State
Dental Association. (Name on application.)



MENNEN'S BORATED TALCUM TOILET POWDER



"Baby's Best Friend"

and Mamma's greatest comfort. Mennen's relieves and prevents **Prickly Heat, Chafing and Sunburn**.

For your protection the genuine is put up in non-re-
sealable boxes—the "Box that Lox," with Mennen's face
on top. Sold everywhere or by mail, 25 cents. **Sample free.**
Guaranteed by the Mennen Skin Care Chemical Co., Inc., the Food

and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906, Serial Number 1540.

Try Mennen's Violet (Borated) Talcum Toilet Powder—it
has the scent of Fresh-cut Parma Violets. **Sample free.**

GERHARD MENNEN CO., Newark, N. J.

Mennen's Borated Skin Soap (the wrapper)
Specially prepared for the most delicate skin.
Mennen's Sea Yang Toilet Powder, Oriental Odor
Sold only at Stores.



Brown Your Hair

"You'd never think I stained my hair, after I use Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Juice Hair Stain. The Stain doesn't hurt the hair as dyes do, but makes it grow out fluffy."

Send for a Trial Package.

It only takes you a few minutes once a month to apply Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Juice Hair Stain with your comb. Stains only the hair, doesn't rub off, contains no poisonous dyes, sulphur, lead or copper. Hair colored with Mrs. Potter's stains grows longer and thicker. One bottle of Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Juice Hair Stain should last you a year. Sells for \$1.00 per bottle at first-class druggists. We guarantee satisfaction. Send your name and address on a slip of paper, with this advertisement, and enclose 25 cents (stamp or coin) and we will mail you, charges prepaid, a trial package, in plain, sealed wrapper, with valuable booklet on Hair. Mrs. Potter's Hygienic Supply Co., 938 Grotto Bidg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Trade Mark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

Chiclets

REALLY DELIGHTFUL

The Dainty Mint Covered Candy Coated Chewing Gum

Particularly Desirable after Dinner

BETTER—STRONGER
More lasting flavor than any other
A try—a test—Good-bye to the rest

Sold in 5¢ 10¢ and 25¢ packets
Frank H. Fleer & Company Inc.
Philadelphia, U.S.A. and Toronto, Can.

REDUCE YOUR FLESH

You can safely and speedily reduce your surplus flesh in any part of the body and thus improve your figure by wearing

DR. WALTER'S
FAMOUS
MEDICATED RUBBER GARMENTS
FOR MEN AND WOMEN

They are very comfortable and never fail to accomplish the desired result. Worn by the Royalty of Europe and the Society of America. **Neck and Chin Bands**, as shown in cut, \$3.00
\$1.00
Ankle Bands, per pair " " 2.00
Knee Bands, per pair " " 6.00
Also union suit, jacket, stockings, etc., for the purpose of reducing the flesh anywhere on the body. Invaluable to those suffering from rheumatism. Write at once for further particulars.

DR. JEANNE WALTER,
Patented
Suite 905, 55 W. 33d St., New York



How to Illustrate, \$1.00

A concise, clear and explicit book giving the beginner as well as those further along in their studies complete instruction in the following important teachings of drawings, with its numerous branches: Technic, drawing from nature, drawing animals, landscapes, drawing portraits, figure drawing, monochrome and expression, cartooning, composition, perspective, fashion drawings, lettering, ornamental design, ornamental composition, head and tail pieces, book covers, advertisement designs, color, etc., etc.; oil and water color pigments, and, finally, the mechanics of illustration.

This book has been on the market for the past eight years and has given absolute satisfaction both as a textbook in private schools and art schools as well as to the individual.

We offer \$1.00 for 10 sets of illustrations in water color at \$5.00 per set. The supply of these sets being limited, we will not execute orders after we have sold the balance of 300 sets. In remitting, kindly send check or postal money order.

BROWN PUBLISHING CO., Room 929, Monolith Building
45 West Thirty-fourth Street ————— New York City



HOW MAE EDNA WILDER GOT RID OF A DOUBLE CHIN

Without Dieting, Internal Remedies, Face Straps or Physical Culture—An Interesting Story for Fleshy People

"I removed my double chin and reduced thirty pounds in less than six weeks," says Mae Edna Wilder, who stands five feet high, weighs 120 pounds, and is a picture of perfect health. "I did this by a process which

is my own discovery—a process of external application. I simply apply the treatment to any part of the body where superfluous flesh exists and it vanishes as if by magic. Five minutes every other day for two weeks is all the time needed, and one's most intimate friends need not know anything about it.

I am so grateful for my own relief that I will give free advice to any one who suffers as I did. I consider a double chin one of the most unsightly physical defects, and superfluous flesh is just extra weight that one must carry with them everywhere and all the time. I feel ten years younger and a hundred-fold more active since I lost mine. Any interested person who will write to Mae Edna Wilder, Dept. 89, Rochester, N. Y., will be told how to find relief within two weeks.



**Prof. I. Hubert's
MALVINA CREAM**
"The One Reliable
Beautifier"

Positively cures Freckles, Sunburn, Liver Spots, Hemorrhoids and all imperfections of the skin and prevents wrinkles. Does not merely cover up, but eradicates them. Salvies, Lotion, Cream, Etc. Soap should be used in connection with Malvina Cream. Cream, size: Lotion, 50c; Soap, 25c. At all druggists or send postpaid on receipt of price. Send for testimonials.

PROF. I. HUBERT, TOLEDO, OHIO

Sent on Approval. Send No Money. \$1.50
WE WILL TRUST YOU TEN DAYS. Hair Switch
Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 2½ oz. 22 inch short stem fine human hair switch to you. If you like it, keep it, and if not, return it in ten days, on approval. YOUR MONEY IS FREE. This shades a little more. Inclose postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, brushes, pomades, etc. Anna Ayers,
Dept. 302 27 Quincy St., Chicago.



Beauty Culture BOOK FREE

For a short time only I will send a copy of this great book free to every woman who answers this advertisement. No obligations whatever.

\$3.00 to \$50 a week practicing woman's greatest profession or teaching others. Big demand everywhere for Beauty Culturists who know the Madam Boyd System.

Write Today Just your name and address on a post card
Madam Boyd System, 555 Boyd Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."





Better Than A Mustard Plaster

More effective, easier to apply, and does not blister the tenderest skin.

CAPSICUM VASELINE

IN CONVENIENT, SANITARY,
PURE TIN TUBES

(Contain No Lead)

The safest and best of all counter-irritants, gives over-night relief to strains or muscular lameness and leaves neither stain nor blister. It is particularly valuable for rheumatism, croup and cramps, cold in the chest or throat. Apply externally only and dilute with White, Vaseline for children.

Perhaps you never knew that there are twelve different Vaseline Preparations, each one having many beneficial properties.

OUR FREE VASELINE BOOK

tells you all about

Capsicum Vaseline	Pomade Vaseline
Pure Vaseline	White Vaseline
Carbolated Vaseline	Camphorated Vaseline
Mentholated Vaseline	Borated Vaseline
Vaseline Oxide of Zinc	Perfumed White Vaseline
Vaseline Cold Cream	Vaseline Camphor Ics

It tells you what each preparation is especially good for, and how they should be used to gain immediate relief.

Write for the FREE BOOK TODAY

CHESEBROUGH MFG. CO.

Proprietors of Every "VASELINE" Product

38 State Street, New York

London Office:
Holborn Viaduct



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

SKIN BEAUTY



CUTICURA SOAP

In the treatment of afflictions of the skin and scalp, which torture, disfigure, itch, burn, scale and destroy the hair, as well as for preserving and purifying the complexion, hands and hair, Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment are well-nigh infallible.

Sold throughout the world. Deposits: London, 27 Charterhouse Sq.; Paris, 5 Rue de la Paix; Amsterdam, 119a Waterlooplein; Co., Sydney; India, B. K. Paul, Calcutta; China, Hong Kong Drug Co.; Japan, Maruya, Ltd.; Tokyo; So. Africa, Lennon, Ltd.; Cape Town, etc.; U.S.A. Popular Importers, New York, N.Y., Corp., Sole Prop., 133 Columbus Ave., Boston.

32-page Cuticura Book, post-free, giving description, treatment and cure of torturing, disturbing humours of the skin and scalp.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

Rate, \$2.25 a line, which includes POPULAR and SMITH'S Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next Issue of AINSLEE'S closes September 1st.

Agents & Help Wanted

OUR SWISS EMBROIDERED SHIRTKAIST PATTERNS sell at sight. 15 dollars daily made. Write today for catalog. U.S. Embroidery Mfg. Co., Dept. 7F, 96 East Broadway, N. Y.

LADY SEWERS wanted to make up shields at home; \$10 per 100; can make two an hour; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Send reply envelope for information to Universal Co., Desk S, Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the Transparent Handle Pocket Knife. Big commission paid. From \$75 to \$300 a month can be made. Write for terms. Novelty Cutlery Co., No. 13 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

AGENTS—\$300 every month selling our wonderful 7-piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of \$12 daily profit. Outfit free. Thomas Mfg. Co., 313 Home Bldg., Dayton, O.

AGENTS—\$75 monthly, metal Combination Rolling Pin, 9 articles combined; lighting seller; sample free. Forshee Mfg. Co., box 213, Dayton, O.

ELECTRIC GOODS. Big Cat 3 cts. Undersell all. Fortune for agents. Battery Lamps, lanterns, motors, fans. Ohio Electric Works, Cleveland, O.

AGENTS—Make Big Wages Sure; No-Sew Hooks and Eyes sell on sight; over 70 fast sellers; newest lines, big profits. Catalog. Worker's outfit free. D. Miller & Co. Box 153, Muskegon, Mich.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid \$100 for each work examination of all kinds save. Expert advice, sample questions and Booklet 22 describing questions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them free. Write now. Washington Civil Service School, Washington, D. C.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS AFRICAN TRIP will appear exclusively in "Scribner's Magazine," commencing with the October number. Extraordinary opportunity for getting subscriptions. Thousands of orders will be placed. Agents are wanted in every town in America. Here is an opportunity to make money. Act at once. For full particulars as to liberal cash commissions, extra prizes, agents' outfit and sample copies, address Desk 70, "Scribner's Magazine," 155 Fifth Ave., New York City.

WANTED for Western Canada (The Land of Promise.) Stock Salesmen, smart man can make \$10,000.00 in a year. Apply to Northern Underwriters Limited, Box 1600, Calgary, Alta.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

AGENTS to sell Ladies Novelty Embroid. Waist Patt. Kimonos. Silk Shawls, Scarfs, Mexican Drawn Work, Battenberg, Cluny, Russian Laces Europ. & Orient Novelty. Ask for Cat. S. Bonan, Dep. D, 143 Liberty St. N. Y. C.

• AGENTS. Portraits 35c, Frames 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290-164 W. Adams St., Chicago.

WANTED—Census Clerks, Railway Mail Clerks, City Carriers, Postoffice Clerks. October examinations everywhere. Write for schedule. Candidates coached free. Franklin Institute, Dept. J. 4, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS, Male or Female, can make all kinds of money selling my Pongee Swiss Embroidered Waist Patterns and Silk Shawls. Big money for you. Catalogues mailed on request. Joseph Gluck, Dept. "A" 621 B'way, N.Y. City.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE wanted—splendid income assured right man to act as our representative after learning our business thoroughly by mail. Former experience not necessary. All we require is honesty, ability, ambition and willingness to learn a business. No soliciting or traveling. This is an exceptional opportunity for a man in your section to get into a big paying business without capital and become independent for life. Write at once for full particulars. E. R. Marden, Pres., The Nat'l Co-Op. Real Estate Co., Suite 339, Marden Bldg., Washington, D. C.

AGENTS—Men and Women to represent a Dress Silk and Lace Manuf. Big Profits. We tell you how. Goods cut any length and sold direct from the Looms. Exclusive territory. Royal Silk & Lace Co., Desk M, 487 Broadway, N. Y. City.

DON'T accept an agency until you get my samples and particulars. Chance of a life-time to get into a money-making business. T.M.Sayman 2391 Franklin Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

LADY AGENTS can make \$25 Weekly, easily, selling our Dress Goods. Fall samples now ready. No capital or experience required. Write to-day for particulars. Joseph T. Simon Co., Dept. G, 656 B'way, N. Y.

YOU MAY WIN \$500 IN CASH OR ONE OF 100 OTHER LARGE CASH PRIZES by acting as our agent; sample outfit free; no experience or capital necessary; Mrs. Lillian Harned, of Trenton, N. J., made over \$1000 in her spare time; write us today. McLean, Black & Co., Inc., 13 Beverly Street, Boston.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

SALESMAN wanted to handle an exceptionally attractive real estate and timber proposition, which can be sold on annual, semi-annual or monthly installments. We furnish inquiries and good strong literature. Capable, aggressive and energetic man can make a very desirable connection with the largest and strongest house in its line in the country. Sacramento Valley Imp. Co., St. Louis, Mo.

Business Opportunities

BUSINESS BOOK FREE: TELLS HOW You Can Secure the actual daily working plans, the money-making systems and short cuts of 112 Great, Big, Business Men, to increase your salary—to boost your profits. System, Dept. 25-7 151-153 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

TAILORING Salesmen, own your own business and make \$200 a month or more taking orders for our made-to-order suits. Write today for free outfit. Warrington W. & W. Mills, 173 Adams Street, Dept. 218, Chicago.

\$3000 TO \$10,000 YEARLY easily made in real estate business; no capital required; we teach the business by mail; appoint you special representative, assist you to success. Valuable book free. The Cross Co., 3074 Reaper Block, Chicago. See our other advertisement in this magazine.

TAPPING THE WORLD'S WEALTH. DO YOU WISH TO KNOW HOW IT IS DONE? The ease and readiness of making money by investment in those companies who are now tapping the hidden wealth. Write to-day for our history of California Oil, and how dimes produce dollars. D. S. MacInnes & Company, Suite 946, Marbridge Building, New York.

SAVE time and money. We will represent you in the Western States in any legitimate capacity. Western Business & Sales Co., Cheyenne, Wyo.

For the Deaf

THE ACOUSTICON makes the deaf hear instantly. No trumpet, unsightly or cumbersome apparatus. Special instruments for Theatres and Churches. In successful use throughout the country. Booklet, with the endorsement of those you know, free. K. B. Turner, President, General Acoustic Co., 1207 Broadway, New York City.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Music

SONG-POEMS Made Valuable. Send yours to-day for free criticism and full particulars. Your poem may prove a big hit with the right kind of Music. My music doubles your royalty. Satisfaction guaranteed. Fifteen years' reputation. Arthur A. Penn, 36 Daly's Theatre Building, New York.

SONG POEMS WANTED for publication. With or without music. Send stamps to return manuscripts. Dominion Music Press, 60 W. 25th, New York.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS SECURED or fee returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one invention; \$16,000 for others. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress; sample free. Evans, Wilkins & Company, 356 E. First Street, Washington, D. C.

"**PATENTS & Patent Possibilities**," a reliable treatise on patents, mailed free to any address. H. S. Hill, 24-28 Columbian Bldg., Washington, D. C.

Patents and Lawyers—Continued

PATENTS, ADVICE AND BOOKS free. Highest references. Best results. I procure patents that protect. Watson E. Coleman, Washington, D. C.

Razor Blades Sharpened

SAFETY RAZOR BLADES sterilized and sharpened, better than new; 2 cts. each; satisfaction or money back; 5 yrs. success; send for blade box and circular. Electric Stropping Co., 133 Shelby St., Detroit, Mich.

Musical Instruments

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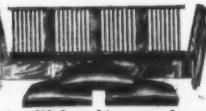
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